United Nations A/CN.10/PV.236

General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

236th meeting

Monday, 26 June 2000, 3 p.m.

New York

Chairman: Mr. Zarif ..... (Islamic Republic of Iran)

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Rowe (Sierra Leone), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

General exchange of views (*continued*)

Mr. Ahmed (Bangladesh): The Bangladesh delegation is pleased to see Mr. Zarif chairing the proceedings of this substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. We would ask him to accept our heartiest felicitations and assurances of our fullest cooperation as he steers the work of this important Commission. We are confident that, under his able and skilful leadership, our deliberations will be fruitful. We would also like to express our thanks and appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Jayantha Dhanapala for his comprehensive presentation covering major issues before this substantive session.

The Disarmament Commission is the specialized deliberative body of the United Nations entrusted with the task of in-depth consideration of specific disarmament issues. We strongly support the work of this multilateral machinery and believe that, in this forum, there is scope for harmonious and effective work. The result of such work can definitely have a positive impact on the disarmament scenario of the world.

Bangladesh considers disarmament to be a vitally important instrument for achieving international security. We favour general and complete disarmament. Our commitment to this goal is unequivocal and flows from our constitutional obligation. Our adherence to major disarmament treaties also stems from that. As an active member of the Conference on Disarmament, Bangladesh remains committed to contributing to discussions, deliberations and substantive negotiations on the whole range of disarmament and non-proliferation issues.

The Secretary-General, in his report on the work of the Organization, has observed that, during the past year, existing disarmament agreements were threatened by a number of developments, which are likely not only to undermine global security, but also to cause an increase in global military expenditures. The disarmament machinery in the United Nations was not fully utilized and no consensus was reached on the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which could set universal goals for the immediate future. The cap on nuclear proliferation remains unshielded and there are suggestions that the number of threshold States may potentially be on the rise. The controversy over vertical proliferation has also been accentuated by subcritical tests.

However bleak the situation may be, there is a perceptible and indeed expanding international consensus that favours the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. The unequivocal declaration by the five nuclear Powers at the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) that they will eliminate nuclear weapons is indeed heartening. This, if adhered to in letter and spirit is a significant step towards a world free of nuclear danger. The call made by The Hague

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Appeal for Peace for the delegitimization of war reflects the conscience of humankind. The agreement finally reached on the starting of negotiations for a fissile material cut-off treaty is also a step forward, as is the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Convention on Landmines. It is now of utmost importance that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), together with its agreed objectives, become universally accepted.

Since its adoption, efforts to promote the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty continue. It is crucial that the three nuclear-weapon States that have not yet ratified the Treaty, as well as those States whose ratification is required for its entry into force, deposit their instruments promptly. I am pleased to inform the Commission that Bangladesh, which signed the CTBT on 24 October 1996, also ratified it earlier this year. However, Bangladesh's major concern has been and continues to be the heavy financial obligations that would devolve on it and other least developed countries on account of the implementation of the CTBT, comprising the expenses of its Preparatory Commission, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization and the verification regime, including the International Monitoring System of the CTBT and the Technical Secretariat. As the Coordinator of the least developed countries, Bangladesh has already voiced its concern on the matter since the first meeting of the CTBT Preparatory Commission in New York. We also did so at the recent Vienna meeting. We need to find a mechanism which would relieve the least developed countries of this heavy burden without jeopardizing the Treaty implementation.

In the field of conventional arms, attention has remained focused on transparency in armaments. We commend the work of the Panel of Governmental Experts in this field. Here, I would like to inform the Commission that Bangladesh has already provided the necessary information for inclusion in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and will continue to do so in future.

It is undeniable that, in the present-day world, the open sale and easy availability of small arms have become a matter of serious concern. It is the abundant and ready supply of easy-to-use tools of conflict, weapons of death and disability, that is responsible for the estimated 90 per cent of all conflict-related deaths and injuries, of which, shockingly, 80 per cent are those of women and children. Illicit international trafficking, the transfer of small arms and their accumulation in many countries constitute a serious threat to their populations and to national and regional security. The problem has been exacerbated by the absence of global norms or standards for the reduction of such accumulation, transfer and trafficking. The holding of an international conference on all aspects of illicit arms next year would be an important step towards the long-felt need to build up a global consensus on the issue as a matter of utmost importance and urgency.

As a party to the Biological Weapons Convention, Bangladesh is fully aware of its responsibilities and takes its obligations seriously. By not having evolved, acquired or stockpiled biological weapons, Bangladesh is in full accord with the provisions of the Convention. Full adherence to the Convention by all States would be a guarantee of the effective elimination of biological weapons. There is therefore a clear need for charting a credible compliance regime. In this context, Bangladesh welcomes the ongoing work of the ad hoc group entrusted to negotiate a protocol to strengthen the Convention by developing a verification and compliance mechanism.

As for the Chemical Weapons Convention, Bangladesh was among the first to sign it and, having no chemical weapons programmes or facilities, we ratified the Convention in April 1997. But our ratification of the Convention will have little meaning unless the major chemical-weapon countries join it. We underscore the necessity of universal adherence to the Convention and call upon all States that have not done so to become States parties to the Convention without delay. We also underline the importance of the early initiation of activities under all relevant provisions of the Convention by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

In today's world, regional disarmament presents newer challenges. In this context, we attach considerable importance to the activities of the United Nations Regional Centres for peace and development. My delegation has always urged that these Centres be given sufficient support and resources so that they can be more active in promoting dialogue on disarmament issues in the regional and subregional contexts. As regards the Centre in Asia and the Pacific, Bangladesh continues to remain disappointed to see that, despite our repeated requests, both in the Disarmament

Commission and in the Committee on Disarmament of the General Assembly, the Centre has not been moved to its location in Kathmandu and is being run from here in New York. There is no reason for the Centre to be run from New York when it was established under a General Assembly resolution to be based in Kathmandu, in the same way that the two other Regional Centres in Africa and Latin America are based in their respective regions and the concerned Directors are also stationed there.

Therefore, the present anomalous practice of running the Regional Centre in Asia and the Pacific from New York, rather than from the host country, does not stand to reason. We once again urge the Department for Disarmament Affairs to look into the matter with greater urgency.

We believe and support the concept that reallocation of resources from armaments to development is essential. Savings from a small cut in armament expenditures can contribute substantially to financing for development. This is particularly true in the case of the major Powers, whose small cut in military expenditures and their reallocation to development in the developing world would make a significant difference.

In closing, may I say that disarmament should not be seen as an end in itself. The noble motivation of disarmament — to save humanity from the scourge of war and destruction — should also inspire us to elevate the majority of human beings from the abyss of poverty and underdevelopment. The savings from even a small cut in military expenditures by major Powers can contribute substantially to the development efforts of the developing countries. Such voluntary cuts in expenditure on arms can raise the dividends for investing in the improvement of the quality of life of the people.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We, too, are delighted to see you, Sir, presiding over this meeting and we wish you and all the members of the Bureau productive work.

Russia assigns a key role in multilateral disarmament to the United Nations. We believe that the importance of the Organization as a disarmament centre will continue to grow in the twenty-first century.

Russia views the full elimination of nuclear weapons as the ultimate goal of its foreign policy on disarmament issues. We strongly favour phased and comprehensive progress on the part of all five nuclear Powers in nuclear disarmament, without artificial delays or unnecessary haste, in the context of maintaining strategic stability. It is important that our efforts in nuclear disarmament fall organically within the construction of a fair, democratic world order based on mutual trust and the equal security of all States. It is precisely in the context of such system that we can effectively implement the goals and potential of establishing a nuclear-free world.

As the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, emphasized in his statement at the sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT):

> "Russia is firm in its nuclear disarmament commitments and intends in the future to pursue them in the context of maintaining strategic stability and the system of disarmament treaties established in the past decade as a basis for further reductions and limitations in strategic offensive weapons."

We highly appreciate the outcome of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, held in New York. We are convinced that its results will have a positive impact on the dynamics of the disarmament and non-proliferation processes. The more we are able to strengthen the Treaty, the stronger will the basis be for deepening and enhancing the nuclear disarmament process as a whole. The dependencies here are directly proportionate.

In the field of nuclear disarmament, much has been done in recent years. The practical steps taken to reduce strategic offensive weapons were an important vector of efforts in this area. I would recall that, in April this year, Russia ratified an important set of nuclear disarmament agreements: the Start II Treaty and the 1997 package of agreements on anti-ballistic missiles (ABM), as well as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Thanks to these major practical steps of ours, the way has been opened to begin negotiations on Start III, which should lead to further radical reduction in nuclear arsenals. We expect that our American partners will also play their part in implementing the necessary formalities for ratifying Start II, the 1997 package of ABM agreements and the CTBT.

The implementation of bilateral Russian-American START agreements, in the context of

preserving the ABM Treaty, as well as the future negotiations of the five and the implementation of the five-sided agreements on the further reduction of nuclear weapons are the items on the nuclear disarmament agenda for the near future. We do not consider it timely or useful, therefore, to begin negotiations on the nuclear disarmament programme within a concrete time-frame.

One extremely urgent issue is the prohibition of the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons. The Russian side is ready for substantive and specific negotiations on the prohibition of the production of fissile materials at the Conference on Disarmament. The development of weapon-grade uranium in Russia ended several years ago. A programme to close production facilities for weapon-grade plutonium is being developed.

At the same time, it should be clear to all that the process of nuclear reduction is possible only in the context of preserving and complying with the 1972 ABM Treaty, which prohibits the development of ABM systems on the territory of any country. The viability of the ABM Treaty will also determine the extension of the arms race into outer space. Its regime will prevent the emergence of an entire category of outer space weapons, particularly missile defence systems. The importance of the Treaty transcends the context of relations between the two super-Powers and has key significance for international security. This is attested to by the outcome of the negotiations on relevant resolutions of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, which confirm the need to maintain and strengthen the ABM Treaty regime.

The development of national ABM systems and the collapse of the Treaty would have a very destructive impact on stability throughout the world and lead to a weakening of the entire complex of disarmament agreements established over almost half a century.

As an alternative to the collapse of the ABM, the Russian side has proposed a number of well-known initiatives on the issue of the missile threat and missile proliferation. Among these is our proposal to create a global monitoring system for the non-proliferation of missiles and missile technologies and to promote international cooperation on non-strategic missile defence systems. Both these proposals are major elements of Russian thought on international interaction on anti-missile systems that would not prejudice the ABM Treaty. We are convinced that their practical implementation would represent a step in the right direction.

I should like to recall that, at the Russian-American summit in June this year, an agreement was reached to establish a joint Russian-American missile watch centre that could eventually assume a multilateral character.

Russia continues consistently to implement unilateral initiatives in the sphere of tactical nuclear weapons. Among other things, such weapons have been entirely removed from surface ships and the general-purpose submarine forces of land-based naval aviation. One third of nuclear warheads have been eliminated from naval aviation and sea-based fleets.

An important role in narrowing the geographic scope of nuclear weapons is being played through the establishment of various nuclear-weapon-free zones throughout the world. We wholeheartedly welcome and encourage this process, which will ultimately help us approach the goal of a nuclear-free world. Russia is a party to most protocols of treaties establishing such zones. We consider it appropriate to recall the Russian proposal that nuclear weapons be concentrated within the confines of the territories of the nuclear States.

We feel that the United Nations should be one of the leading centres for addressing the issues of conventional disarmament. We support, *inter alia*, the convening in 2001 of a United Nations conference devoted to the problems of illicit arms trafficking in all its aspects. In our view, however, it is currently premature to develop any radical international measures to reduce or regulate the legal trade, production, transfer or stockpiling of such weapons. The delivery of weapons to meet the legitimate defensive needs of States corresponds to the meaning of Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, which enshrines the right of States to individual and collective self-defence.

We view the successful adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) to be a contribution to strengthening European security. It is paramount to implement in practice the results of this adaptation. We believe that the European experience with the Treaty could be taken into account in the elaboration of confidence-building measures in other regions of the world.

Russia favours the development of widespread international cooperation to prevent the illicit traffic in conventional weapons, particularly small and light arms, including through interaction between law enforcement, customs and state licensing authorities.

The solution of the overall problem of the illegal proliferation of conventional weapons cannot be considered separately from the need to develop and adopt practical measures to prevent and regulate armed conflicts. In this connection, we feel it essential that general approaches be developed to ensure timely responses to crises, the prevention of conflicts and the provision of assistance to States confronting the problems of illicit arms trafficking.

We consider it appropriate to raise the issue of the need to harmonize and update national legislation and regulations on arms-export controls and to develop appropriate further measures in the sphere of existing monitoring mechanisms, among which are the Vienna agreements, the outcome of corresponding work done by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Wassenar Arrangement and the Groups of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and on Small Arms.

Russia is firmly convinced that the Disarmament Commission is an important international forum in the sphere of disarmament. I hope that the consideration of issues on the Commission's agenda will be successful and productive.

Mr. Shen Guofang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, the Chinese delegation would like to congratulate the Deputy Foreign Minister of Iran, Mr. Zarif, on his assumption of the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at its current session. I also wish to congratulate the other members of the Bureau. The Chinese delegation will cooperate fully with the Bureau and other delegations.

I also wish to take this opportunity to thank the Chairman of the last session, Mr. Abdelaziz, Deputy Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations, for his contribution to the work of that session.

This is the first session of the Disarmament Commission convened in the new century and the new millennium. At this juncture, people are still concerned about the global security environment. The world is far from tranquil. The old security concepts and the cold-war mentality based on military alliance and the build-up of armaments linger on, posing a serious threat to international peace and stability. Hegemonism and power politics are still hampering the establishment of a just and rational new international political and economic order.

Against this backdrop, international arms control and disarmament efforts have suffered some serious setbacks. A certain country, although very strongly encouraged at the negotiation and conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), refused to ratify it, casting doubt over the Treaty's prospects for entering into force. The very same country, in disregard of strong international opposition, is intensifying its efforts to develop national and theatre missile defence systems, to the detriment of global strategic equilibrium and regional stability. That country has even threatened to withdraw from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty that underpins international arms-control efforts. The strong momentum emerging in the field of international disarmament after the end of the cold war has been severely weakened. People are worried about the future course of disarmament efforts.

The Chinese delegation maintains that cooperation on an equal footing is essential for progress in international disarmament efforts. This has been true in the past and will remain so in the future. This is also an important part of the new security concept advocated by China, which is based on mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation. All countries, big or small, rich or poor, strong or weak, should have an equal right to security. Disarmament is not intended to enhance the security of an individual country or a group of countries. Disarmament should not become a tool for stronger nations to control weaker ones, still less an instrument for a handful of countries to optimize their weaponry in order to seek unilateral security advantage.

The Chinese delegation has always attached importance to the Disarmament Commission and has participated in its every session in a constructive manner. The Chinese delegation believes that the Commission plays an irreplaceable role in formulating guidelines for international arms control and disarmament. In current circumstances, as international disarmament efforts have come to a crossroads, we need the Disarmament Commission even more to explore principles and ways to advance the disarmament process.

As agreed upon by all delegations, "Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament" is one of the two substantive agenda items of the current session of the Disarmament Commission. Since last session, there have been some new developments in the field of nuclear disarmament. The Chinese delegation welcomes the ratification of the START II Treaty and the CTBT by the Russian Federation. Such moves give a new impetus to the nuclear disarmament process. We expect START II to be implemented and START III negotiations initiated as soon as possible.

Irreversibility is a basic guiding principle for nuclear disarmament. Nuclear disarmament should be a comprehensive and irreversible process, rather than an opportunity for major nuclear Powers to optimize and upgrade their nuclear arsenals. The nuclear warheads deactivated in accordance with disarmament agreements should be destroyed immediately and not retained for future redeployment. Putting deactivated nuclear warheads in so-called "inactive reserve" under constant maintenance cannot be regarded as nuclear disarmament in any real sense.

The prevention of nuclear-weapon proliferation is a necessary step towards a world free of nuclear weapons. The sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), convened not long ago, demonstrated once again the common will of the international community against nuclear proliferation. The outcome of that Conference will help to enhance the nuclear non-proliferation regime. We call upon countries concerned to sign the CTBT and to accede to the NPT as soon as possible. The Chinese Government has already submitted the CTBT to the National People's Congress for approval and hopes that the review and approval process will be speedy.

China has consistently advocated the comprehensive prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons. The Chinese delegation is of the view that the most rational and feasible confidence-building measure in current circumstances is for nuclear-weapon States to undertake unconditionally and in legal form not to be the first to use nuclear weapons and not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones. The prohibition of the first use of nuclear weapons will increase mutual trust among nuclear-weapon States and between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States. This will reduce the risk of nuclear war and create the necessary conditions for the complete prohibition of nuclear weapons.

China supports the negotiation and conclusion of a fissile material cut-off treaty. Meanwhile, we hold that, when a country pursues the development of a missile defence system with outer space as its main base, the prevention of an arms race in outer space is more urgent than negotiations on a cut-off treaty. Therefore, the three major disarmament issues — nuclear disarmament, the prevention of an arms race in outer space and a fissile material cut-off treaty — should be dealt with in a balanced manner at the Conference on Disarmament.

China supports practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. The Chinese delegation maintains that confidence-building measures with respect to conventional arms should not compromise the security of countries concerned. We should explore principles and ways to guarantee the security of countries concerned so as to create a favourable atmosphere for establishing global confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms.

The Chinese delegation is also of the view that confidence-building measures should not be discussed in abstract terms. Instead, we should explore concrete measures in the light of specific conditions and timing and seek common ground while putting aside differences. The Chinese delegation welcomes the measures taken by some countries in Europe, America and Africa in recent years. We think that these measures are conducive to the maintenance of regional peace and stability and may facilitate the exploration of global confidence-building measures on conventional arms.

However, I should like to point out that, given varying regional conditions, the experience and practice of one region may offer some reference, but cannot be rigidly copied by, still less imposed on other regions. The Chinese delegation holds that confidence-building measures should be established in a phased approach, starting with the easy ones. As initial steps, we might explore some principles, such as pursuing a national defence policy that is defensive in nature, keeping armaments at a reasonable level without jeopardizing the security and stability of other countries, and refraining from targeting a third country in bilateral security cooperation.

China pursues a good-neighbourly policy and attaches importance to the establishment of practical confidence-building measures with its neighbours. In recent years, China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan signed the Agreement on Confidence-Building in the Military Field along the Border Areas and the Agreement on Mutual Reduction of Military Forces in the Border Areas. A regular summit meeting has been institutionalized among the five countries. China and India signed the Agreement on Confidence-Building Measures in the Military Field Along the Line of Actual Control in the China-India Border Areas and the Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity Along the Line of Actual Control in the China-India Border Areas.

I would also like to take this opportunity to point out that China is firmly opposed to the attempts of certain countries to undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other countries by means of arms sales. Taiwan is an inalienable part of China. This has been recognized by the international community. However, certain countries, in disregard of this fact, have been selling large amounts of advanced weapons to Taiwan. This action violates the principle of respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity enshrined in the United Nations Charter. It not only jeopardizes China's sovereignty and security, but also poses a threat to peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. This goes against the spirit of confidence-building measures. We demand that countries concerned stop this misguided practice as soon as possible.

Mr. Kuchynski (Ukraine): First of all, let me extend to Mr. Zarif our congratulations on his assumption of his duties as Chairman of this august body. I am confident that, under his able and wise leadership and with the active participation of all delegations, the Commission's work will yield effective and fruitful results.

Ukraine is encouraged by and positively evaluates the outcome of the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. A common understanding on the nuclear disarmament agenda was reached at the Conference for the first time in 15 years. We believe that the results of the Conference are very important for the work of this session of the Disarmament Commission, specifically in the field of nuclear disarmament. My delegation would like to underline the fact that, for the first time, all nuclear States declared a unilateral commitment to eliminating gradually their nuclear arsenals. We are of the opinion that those States should play the leading role in the process of nuclear disarmament and take practical steps towards that goal.

In this context, Ukraine welcomes the ratification of the START II treaty and the package of New York agreements to the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty by the Russian parliament. We believe that this could give an additional impetus to the global process of nuclear disarmament and to the negotiations between the United States and Russia on this issue in particular. We hope that the United States will follow the Russian Federation by ratifying START II and the package as soon as possible. Now it is imperative to ensure the implementation of START II and to resume talks on START III.

Ukraine is concerned about the present situation regarding the ABM Treaty. We clearly understand that a process of further strategic offensive arms limitation and maintaining strategic stability in the world depends today largely on preserving the ABM Treaty. As a party to the Treaty, Ukraine notes the important role played by two leading nuclear Powers — the United States and the Russian Federation. We fully realize that the fate of the Treaty depends primarily on the position of those States on the issue of its possible adaptation to new realities.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform Member States about the preparations in Ukraine for the ratification of the memorandum of understanding relating to the ABM Treaty, signed on 26 September 1997 in New York. This document legally codifies the succession under the ABM Treaty, and its entry into force will have a positive effect on the Treaty's viability in new geopolitical circumstances.

The necessity for improving and strengthening the existing international nuclear non-proliferation regime remains one of the most burning issues of today. We are convinced that the best way to achieve this is to enhance the efficiency of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to make it universal. This was unequivocally demonstrated in the course of the 2000 NPT Review Conference. We continue to call upon all those States that are not yet parties to the NPT to sign the Treaty.

My delegation is convinced that enlargement of the "nuclear club" is absolutely unacceptable.

Let me stress that the Government of Ukraine pays particular attention to the issue of implementation of a full moratorium on nuclear tests. Ukraine welcomes the earliest possible entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We consider the CTBT a significant part of the international legal basis for promoting the process of real nuclear disarmament, and we call upon all States — first of all, nuclear ones, whose ratification of the Treaty is indispensable for its entry into force — to complete the ratification procedures.

Ukraine believes that security assurances play a significant role in the process of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. It is our belief that one effective means of providing such assurances is the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. Ukraine is a consistent supporter of the establishment of such zones.

Ukraine attaches considerable importance to confidence-building measures in the sphere of conventional weapons. One of the main problems in this field is the illegal trade in and spread of small arms and light weapons, which is the focus of attention of various international organizations, Governments and non-governmental institutions, since these weapons appear to be the primary cause of numerous casualties. Ukraine fully realizes the importance of this topic. We understand that it demands coordinated and concerted efforts on the multilateral level and requires a thorough study of the political, military and economic aspects, in particular States' legitimate defence and security needs.

We support the basic measures developed by the European Union, focused on efficient export and import licensing for small arms and light weapons, and for combating illicit trafficking in these weapons. My delegation also supports the work of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Forum for Security Cooperation aimed at the prevention of the proliferation of destabilizing small arms and light weapons. For its part, Ukraine is pursuing a responsible policy regarding the supply of military goods to the international market. The efficient national export-control system provides for licensing the export and import of weapons, including small arms and light weapons. In our country the internal control of small arms and light weapons is regulated by legislative acts and normative documents.

I also remind the Commission about the initiative of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Mr. Tarasyuk, at the ad hoc meeting of the Security Council last September on holding a conference of major producers and suppliers, with the purpose of studying concrete measures for preventing illegal international weapons transfers. We believe such steps will facilitate confidence-building in the sphere of conventional arms.

Finally, let me express the hope that this session will give further impetus to the ongoing international efforts in the field of nuclear disarmament and assist effective combating of the uncontrolled proliferation and destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons.

Mr. Sychov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, I congratulate Mr. Zarif, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on his election as Chairman for this year's substantive session. We also congratulate all the other members of the Bureau who have been elected for this session, and thank the former Deputy Permanent Representative of Egypt for his very successful leadership of the last session.

The adoption — at last, this morning — of the agenda for the present session has once again demonstrated the ability of member States to cooperate fully when faced with a choice between seeing a negotiating process fail and compromising on key points in a way acceptable to all. Despite the alarming evidence that a spirit of confrontation was triumphing over widely accepted human values and interests, in the end this tradition of compromise was once again confirmed.

Last year the Disarmament Commission adopted two consensus instruments which showed the significant contribution States are making to the development of a disarmament and international security instrument and mechanisms. This work once again demonstrated the importance of our forum and how essential it is, if steady progress is to be made in promoting international peace and security.

Despite the fact that this year the Disarmament Commission is beginning its consideration of two new items — nuclear disarmament and conventional arms — we are not beginning our work from scratch. A

significant basis for our work can be found in the compromises achieved on nuclear disarmament at the year 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The programme agreed and adopted by all the Governments and set out in the Final Document of the Conference gives the international community a clear picture of the steps that will have to be taken in the near future.

The first is to have the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) enter into force as soon as possible. I would like particularly to note that on 25 April the CTBT was ratified by both houses of the Belarus Parliament, which reconfirms the steadfast and consistent commitment of the Government of Belarus to its responsibilities to ensure nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament so as to promote international peace and security.

Our delegation attaches great importance to the universality of this Treaty which, in the assessment of an absolute majority of States, is the most optimal compromise on this issue at this stage and which enjoys the support of the five nuclear Powers. Despite the fact that the United States Congress has refused to ratify the Treaty, which is essential for the entire nuclear disarmament process, we express the hope that the present and future United States Administrations will consistently comply with the Treaty's provisions.

Secondly, Belarus, as is well known, was the first nuclear-weapon State to voluntarily relinquish the nuclear option. Therefore, we are convinced of the need for legally binding guarantees to non-nuclear-weapon States. Belarus supports efforts to develop a uniform approach to the need to draw up a legally binding international convention on such guarantees. At the same time, we welcome the nuclear Powers' unilateral declaration of their policy not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States. Belarus is convinced of the need, at this stage of nuclear disarmament, to establish a combination of multilateral and bilateral guarantees to non-nuclear-weapon States.

Thirdly, to support the strategic stability that undeniably affects every aspect of the international disarmament process, it is important that Russia ratify START II and also that the United States and Russia reach agreement regarding the framework for START III. In this context, I would like to take this opportunity to express our delegation's great concern over the plan to deploy national anti-missile defence systems, in violation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. We have no doubt that this would undermine the existing nuclear non-proliferation regime and have a most negative impact on the system of strategic stability that has developed over decades.

Fourthly, there is an incontrovertible and universally recognized need to begin as soon as possible in the Conference on Disarmament negotiations to prohibit the production of fissile materials for use in weapons. The creation of a subsidiary organ of the Conference on Disarmament in the very near future will allow a focused approach to this issue in all its aspects.

Fifthly, Belarus considers that under present conditions nuclear disarmament must be supplemented by steps to strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime, including measures to establish new nuclear-weapon-free zones. We welcome the signature and implementation of the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Pelindaba, Rarotonga and Bangkok, as well as progress in establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones in Central Asia and in giving Mongolia a nuclear-weapon-free status. We also support the efforts of all the countries in the Middle East to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone there.

Reflecting on its contributions to and responsibility in the area of nuclear disarmament, Belarus continues to believe in the important and fruitful initiative to create a nuclear-weapon-free space in Central and Eastern Europe. We are convinced that the time will come when political considerations of the moment, which are impeding the strengthening of a nuclear-weapon-free space in Central and Eastern Europe, will be eliminated and this idea will become a reality. It would not impinge on the interests of any State in the region; on the contrary, it would strengthen security and stability in the European region, and thus foster global security and stability. Belarus is open to cooperating on this issue with countries of Eastern Europe and with any other countries.

The Government of Belarus believes that such principles of nuclear disarmament as transparency with respect to nuclear weapons, the irreversibility of nuclear disarmament measures and of measures to control nuclear weapons, the reduction of the role of nuclear weapons and the accelerated destruction of

nuclear weapons, with an unequivocal commitment to the complete elimination of nuclear arsenals, should be the thrust of the international community's concerted nuclear disarmament efforts. We are committed to reducing the nuclear threat and danger through consistent and phased disarmament, including through the strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation regime — with the ultimate objective, of course, of eliminating nuclear weapons.

Given the increased number of regional and local conflicts, approaches to strengthening cooperation and measures to build confidence among States, military-political alliances and combinations are more urgently needed than ever before. In this situation, the European-wide cooperation on confidence-building and security measures that has been organized in the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) provides a very effective model for cooperation among countries. These were the precise objectives of the treaty to reduce conventional weapons in Europe.

The Republic of Belarus takes very seriously its obligations under international treaties and already has experience in the destruction of conventional weapons in accordance with the treaty. Despite the Republic's significant financial burdens, our country has fulfilled its commitment, which accounted for approximately 10 per cent of all reductions of heavy technology under the treaty. We hope that this contribution by our country has made possible the consolidation of these positive results in the area of conventional weapons reduction and in strengthening confidence and cooperation among European countries — efforts that now count among the achievements in the field of global security.

We also believe that further steps in the area of confidence-building among States, particularly given the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) through the admission of new members, should be carried out in accordance with the interests of all countries in the region. Any attempts to establish security at the expense of other States unacceptable. In this connection, our delegation will actively participate in the consideration of the question of practical measures to strengthen and build confidence in the sphere of conventional weapons.

Belarus participated with other countries in the Commission's previous session on the development of a working document on guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace. This session was preceded by a number of international meetings and consultations in this area. Our position is that a voluntary approach in this area is essential, as is an agreement among States on the guiding principles. There is also a need for an integrated approach to activities to develop practical measures for disarmament in post-conflict situations, confidence-building, rendering financial and technical assistance, carrying out other measures with respect to the control of conventional weapons, including their reduction and disarmament. All these issues must be viewed in relation to one another, particularly together with other regional and subregional initiatives, which promote confidence and peace among countries.

In conclusion, I would like to express our conviction that at this session the Disarmament Commission will be able to strike a proper balance between national interests and the future security of the international community as a whole.

The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.

United Nations A/CN.10/PV.237

General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

237th meeting

Tuesday, 27 June 2000, 10 a.m.

New York

Chairman: Mr. Zarif ..... (Islamic Republic of Iran)

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Pohan (Indonesia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

General exchange of views (*continued*)

Mr. Pal (India): We are pleased that Mr. Javad Zarif has been elected to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at its 2000 substantive session, and we would like to join other speakers in congratulating him on his election. We would like also to congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election. Let me take this opportunity to place on record our appreciation for the untiring efforts and the positive contribution of the Chairman of the Commission at its 1999 session, Ambassador Maged A. Abdelaziz of Egypt.

The Disarmament Commission has a special responsibility for promoting and enhancing the international disarmament agenda by providing the deliberative leg of the triad of disarmament machinery, along with the First Committee and the Conference on Disarmament. The Disarmament Commission plays an important and unique role by allowing for in-depth discussion of items on its agenda with a view to formulating consensus recommendations keeping in mind the overall objectives of the disarmament agenda. For guiding our work during this session, we have before us General Assembly resolution 54/56 A. That consensus resolution calls on the Commission to continue its work in accordance with its mandate as set forth in the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly, which was the first special session devoted to disarmament.

We have two new topics on our agenda this year as the Disarmament Commission begins its three-year cycle of in-depth substantive deliberations. The topics — "Ways, and means to achieve nuclear disarmament" and "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms" — may be new, but the issues themselves are fairly well known, having engaged our attention for many decades.

On nuclear disarmament, India has traditionally attached and continues to attach the highest priority to this. My country has been in the forefront of initiatives and proposals concerning nuclear disarmament. India was the first to call for a ban on nuclear testing, in 1954. In 1963, we were among those who advocated an international non-proliferation agreement under which nuclear-weapon States would agree to give up their arsenals provided other countries refrained from developing or acquiring such weapons. In 1978, India proposed negotiations on an international convention to prohibit the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. In 1988, India put forward an action plan for the phased elimination of all nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework. In August 1996, India joined an initiative by 28 countries in the Conference on Disarmament proposing a programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons. India has been sponsoring, along with other countries, draft General Assembly resolutions for a convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons in order to delegitimize the role

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of nuclear weapons. To build support for this process of delegitimization while reducing the dangers associated with the hair-trigger alert of nuclear weapons, we have also joined in sponsoring, since 1998, new draft resolutions on reducing nuclear danger.

India's commitment to global nuclear disarmament remains undiminished. We remain convinced of the importance of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of July 1996, that

> "there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control". (*A/51/218, annex, para. 105 (f)*)

India today is the only nuclear-weapon State calling for a nuclear weapons convention prohibiting the development, production, testing, deployment, stockpiling, threat of use or use of nuclear weapons and providing for their elimination, on the lines of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction.

We will continue to support initiatives, individually or collectively with the non-aligned, for nuclear disarmament. India fully supports the position on nuclear disarmament adopted by the Durban Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, reiterated recently by the non-aligned Foreign Ministers meeting in Cartagena, calling for establishing in the Conference on Disarmament in 2000 an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament to start negotiations on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons with a specified framework of time, including a nuclear weapons convention. This principled position is echoed in the proposals contained in documents CD/1570 and CD/1571 put forward last year by the Group of 21 in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, and reiterated in the Conference on Disarmament statement of 27 January this year by Malaysia, speaking as coordinator of the Group of 21. It is a matter of disappointment that the Conference on Disarmament, the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament, has been unable to start negotiations on nuclear disarmament, to which the international community has attached the highest priority.

India has been a strong proponent of global nuclear disarmament and has taken numerous initiatives towards that objective. We remain committed to nuclear non-proliferation. India holds that genuine and lasting non-proliferation can be achieved only through agreements that are based upon equality and non-discrimination, for only these can contribute to global peace and stability. India has been a responsible member of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, and will continue to take initiatives and to work with like-minded countries to bring about stable, genuine and lasting non-proliferation, thus leading to a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The failure of the international community to effectively address the threat posed by nuclear weapons for more than 50 years enjoins us to redouble our efforts for their complete elimination in the coming years. Ours is, however, not an all-or-nothing approach. In order to prepare the ground for negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention, India is willing to participate in agreed, multilateral, non-discriminatory and irreversible steps or measures.

These include a global non-first-use agreement which would include an agreement on non-use against non-nuclear weapon States that would meet the requirement for comprehensive, legally binding and irreversible negative security assurances as well as assurances to members of nuclear-weapon-free zones. We were pleased that the Disarmament Commission was able to reach agreement last year on consensus guidelines concerning nuclear-weapon-free zones. India respects the sovereign choice exercised by non-nuclear-weapon States in establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned, as well as the status of such zones. We are ready to convert this commitment into a legal obligation.

Secondly, negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a convention on the prohibition of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons as a decisive step to delegitimize nuclear weapons are an essential element in the step-by-step process leading to the elimination of nuclear weapons. India has been among the sponsors of General Assembly resolutions entitled

"Convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons".

With the end of the cold war a decade ago, there remains no justification for maintaining thousands of nuclear weapons in a state of hair-trigger alert involving unacceptable risks of unintentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons. There is a clear need for commitments from all nuclear-weapon States to reduce the risk of unauthorized as well as of accidental or unintentional use of nuclear weapons. Consistent with policies of non-first-use and the defensive role of nuclear weapons, the nuclear-weapon States need to take concrete steps to lower their alert status through gradual de-alerting actions.

The initial promise of deep, progressive and irreversible reductions in strategic nuclear arsenals of the early post-cold-war years appears to be fading. Countries with the largest nuclear arsenals clearly have the main responsibility for moving forward the process of nuclear arms reductions. Thus, there is a need for early revitalization of the bilateral process, which should also be complemented by reductions in a multilateral framework. Nuclear-weapon States should commit themselves not to deploy their nuclear weapons outside their own national territories. Nuclear weapon-sharing arrangements need to be abjured not only because they violate existing covenants but also because they contribute to enhancing the role of nuclear weapons. Tactical nuclear weapons that could be employed for war fighting roles also need to be eliminated. We urge the Conference on Disarmament to establish an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, with an appropriate mandate to undertake substantive negotiations for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Even though we are aware that a fissile material cut-off treaty, as and when it is concluded, will be but a partial measure towards our shared objective of global nuclear disarmament, we support the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty in the Conference on Disarmament. India joined the consensus in the General Assembly in 1998 on resolution 53/77 I, reaffirming the substance of resolution 48/75 L of 1993, of which India had been a sponsor.

India has consistently opposed the weaponization of outer space and maintains that arms control treaties need to be implemented fully and in good faith to maintain stability. Unilateral actions perceived to be inconsistent with existing treaties may reduce the prospects for further nuclear disarmament, weaken non-proliferation constraints and encourage other nuclear-weapon States to reconsider their strategic force modernization plans. The appropriate answer to the concerns that have been put forth as justification for these actions is, we believe, a combination of de-alerting measures that would reduce risks associated with accidental or unauthorized launches and an accelerated nuclear disarmament process that would reduce and eventually eliminate those risks.

Keeping in mind the objective of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, we look forward to substantive discussions regarding ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament.

Our discussions on issues relating to conventional arms will, no doubt, benefit from existing work in this area, particularly the 1999 Disarmament Commission guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N; the 1996 Disarmament Commission guidelines for international arms transfers in the context of General Assembly resolution 46/36 H of 6 December 1991; the 1993 guidelines and recommendations for the regional approaches to disarmament within the context of global security; and the guidelines for the study on conventional disarmament, adopted in 1982. In the light of previously agreed guidelines adopted by the Disarmament Commission by consensus, we need to avoid less productive approaches and concepts that detract from previous work. It is important to focus on issues relevant to disarmament and to avoid duplication of work undertaken elsewhere. It is therefore important first to clarify the scope of our discussions.

India supports greater transparency in the global arms trade as an important confidence-building measure. We have regularly provided information to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms since its inception. We believe that the further consolidation and universalization of the Register is necessary to realize its full potential. It is in this context that we supported a General Assembly resolution requesting the Secretary-General to prepare a report on the continuing operation of the Register with the assistance of a group of governmental experts to be convened in 2000. The report of the group of governmental experts will no doubt constitute a useful

resource in guiding our deliberations in the Disarmament Commission.

The question of arms transfers can basically be divided into two categories: licit State-to-State transfers to meet legitimate defence requirements and security concerns based on threat perceptions, and illicit arms transfers often involving a pernicious nexus with cross-border terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime. Illicit trade in small arms and light weapons involving diversion to non-State entities has implications not only for the security of States but also for their economic and social development. The international community has recognized this as one of the priority problems, and an international conference in 2001 will address the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. India supports and will continue actively to participate in the preparatory process for that conference. A successful international conference that comes out with effective measures for combating illicit transfers and circulation will itself constitute an important confidence-building measure for international peace and security.

Landmines constitute another important element of our discussions on conventional weapons. India's approach and position on the issue of landmines is clear and consistent. We remain committed to the objective of a non-discriminatory, universal and global ban on anti-personnel mines through a phased process that addresses the legitimate defence requirements of States, while at the same time ameliorating the humanitarian crises that have resulted from the irresponsible transfer and indiscriminate use of landmines. We believe that a phased approach commends itself as a confidence-building process enabling States, particularly those with long borders, such as India, to move ahead while remaining sensitive to safeguarding their legitimate security requirements. Such a phased approach constitutes a confidence-building measure as it narrows the scope in which landmines can be used only for the defence of borders. India also supports negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament for a ban on transfers of anti-personnel landmines on the basis of a mandate that reflects the interests of all delegations.

Meanwhile, the process of the complete elimination of anti-personnel landmines will be facilitated by addressing the legitimate defensive role of anti-personnel landmines for operational requirements under the defence doctrines of the countries concerned, through the availability of appropriate militarily effective, non-lethal and cost-effective alternative technologies. In this context, India attaches importance to the full and unhampered transfer of technology related to mine detection and clearance, as well as to international assistance. India has been an active participant in the process relating to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, and has signed and ratified all its protocols, including the latest amended Protocol II concerning landmines and Protocol IV on blinding laser weapons. The universalization of the Convention process through the early signature and ratification of all its protocols would, in our opinion, constitute a major confidence-building measure in the conventional arms field. In addition, we would urge all States parties to fulfil the commitments undertaken in the Convention framework. The review conference to be held in 2001 will no doubt provide a good opportunity for stock-taking under the Convention's various protocols.

My delegation looks forward to engaging actively in substantive and meaningful deliberations during this session and would like to assure the Chairman of our fullest cooperation.

Mr. Albin (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish at the outset to congratulate the Deputy Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, His Excellency Mr. Javad Zarif, on his election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission. The delegation of Mexico pledges its full support to the Chairman with a view to ensuring the success of the work of the Commission. Our congratulations go also to the other Commission officers.

We convey our thanks to the delegation of Egypt for the splendid work that Mr. Maged A. Abelaziz carried out as Chairman of the Commission at its 1999 session.

For the first time, the Disarmament Commission is putting into practice the agreements set out in General Assembly decision 52/492 of 8 September 1998 on rationalization of the Commission's work. We are pleased that the lengthy consultation process on the two substantive items on our agenda attained its principal goals: balance in the consideration of the Commission's disarmament agenda, and reaffirmation of the important role of the Commission as a

deliberative body within the existing disarmament machinery.

It is our hope that our debate over the coming fortnight will lay the groundwork for the consideration of both of our substantive agenda items over the next two years with a view to the adoption of recommendations or guidelines for consideration by the General Assembly. My delegation will do its utmost to attain that goal.

On the item entitled "Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament", we believe that the Disarmament Commission should take into account recent events in that sphere. I refer in particular to the consensus decisions of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The programme of action on nuclear disarmament adopted at that Conference includes measures underscoring the unequivocal commitment of nuclear-weapon States to bring about the complete elimination of their nuclear arsenals. We are convinced that that commitment, along with other measures set out in the programme of action, can provide a basis for our deliberations.

We recognize that the Disarmament Commission is not a forum in which binding international nuclear-disarmament instruments can be negotiated. But it is a forum in which we can openly and constructively address various aspects of the subject. We are convinced that by the end of the third year of the Commission's consideration of "Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament" we will have given strong new impetus to the work of other disarmament organs.

On the item entitled "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms", we believe that the accumulated experience at the bilateral, subregional and regional levels should be the point of reference for the discussions that are about to begin. For the Americas, the most recent example of the determination of the countries of the region to make progress with respect to confidence-building measures was the 1999 adoption of the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions, the provisions of which largely echo the structure of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

In our view, when the Disarmament Commission considers that item it should focus on new measures to promote confidence-building among Member States, avoiding duplication of the negotiations in the Commission that some years ago led to the adoption of guidelines for appropriate types of confidence-building measures and for the implementation of such measures on a global or regional level.

The current situation in the Conference on Disarmament, where negotiations have not yielded agreement on that body's programme of work, makes us particularly sensitive to the need to renew efforts to overcome obstacles in the political dialogue on disarmament issues. With that hope in mind, the delegation of Mexico considers that the Secretary-General's proposal to convene an international conference to identify ways and means of eliminating the nuclear threat would provide a special opportunity to consider actions necessary to make progress in the nuclear disarmament process. My delegation hopes that that initiative will be considered at the present session.

Mr. Estévez-López (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to begin, as other speakers in this general exchange of views have, by conveying congratulations to Mr. Javad Zarif on his election to chair the Disarmament Commission at its 2000 substantive session. We are convinced that, given his experience and the zeal with which he has tackled his work, we will by the end of this session have attained our objectives. My congratulations go also to the other members of the Bureau.

Fifty-five years have gone by since the beginning of the nuclear era, which brought about a race to manufacture weapons of mass destruction, something that endangers international security and the very existence of humanity. Throughout those 55 years we have witnessed efforts to rein in the competition unleashed in connection with nuclear weapons. Yet despite the advances that have been made, we are beginning a new century without having attained our principal objective: not merely to slow the proliferation of nuclear weapons, but also to reach the point of true disarmament.

A few weeks ago, at the close of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, consensus was reached on a final document that, although reflecting agreement, was not a significant advance in that sphere. We can, however, point to what appears to be one positive development: the reaffirmation by nuclear-

weapon States of their unequivocal determination ultimately to eliminate them. During the Review Conference we could discern some progress in respect of safeguards and of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. But, unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, particularly in the Middle East and in South Asia.

Guatemala cannot but feel satisfaction at the fact that our Latin American and Caribbean region has played a pioneering role in the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. We fully appreciate the importance of these undertakings and place high value on the benefits derived from them. That is why we resolutely support all current efforts to create such zones in other parts of the world. We consider that they can and should serve as a regional platform for promoting the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and the disarmament process. Our efforts should be directed at ensuring that the use of nuclear energy contributes to the development of humankind, not to its destruction.

Until now, we have lived in a world where the existence of nuclear weapons has been justified largely as a preventive measure guaranteeing the maintenance of international peace. And we have seen a conventional arms race carried out in the name of the defence and the security of our peoples, involving weapons with unprecedented destructive capacity that are becoming an ever increasing potential danger affecting all of us equally. This is why, in our opinion, it is imperative that we bring this situation to an end. We therefore support such initiatives as the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, which we consider to be a concrete measure in that regard.

Moreover, we are pleased to have been among the sponsors of most of the General Assembly's resolutions on conventional weapons. Among these, we wish to single out resolution 54/43, on objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures, and resolution 54/54 H, on the consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures.

Regarding the latter resolution, Guatemala has from the outset been participating very actively in the group of interested States led by Germany, in which some 70 United Nations Member States participate. Activities such as that being carried out in Albania by the Department for Disarmament Affairs provide an example of cooperation among members of that group and of the results of their work.

Having endured the tragic effects of an armed conflict for so many years, and continuing to have to cope with ordinary criminal violence in which small arms and light weapons play an important role, Guatemala urges all States members of the Commission to join efforts to halt the advance of and reduce to the minimum the arms race in all its aspects. This must be everyone's struggle, not the struggle of a few. In this regard, the United Nations and its institutions as a whole, as well as its Member States, should remain united.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish at the outset to extend to the Chairman and all the other members of the Bureau my sincere congratulations on your election.

The work of the Disarmament Commission marks the beginning of a new three-year journey to establish a framework for guidelines and ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament and practical confidence-building measures in the area of conventional weapons — these being the two issues agreed for consideration at this session.

I wish to deal with nuclear disarmament as a first priority in disarmament activities, as determined by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in its Final Document. We had hoped that the topic adopted for consideration on nuclear disarmament would be more specific, containing a specific reference to a commitment to serious work in order to free the world of nuclear weapons. We had hoped that the nuclear disarmament issue would be dealt with in the spirit that prevailed throughout the sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which led to adoption of a Final Document including a full commitment of nuclear-weapon States to bring about nuclear disarmament.

Moving to a world free of nuclear weapons should begin with serious regional efforts aimed collectively at achieving nuclear disarmament and freeing the world of its perils. In our region, the Middle East, all the countries of the region but one — Israel — have been committed to achieving this noble objective. All other Middle Eastern countries have acceded to the NPT. The accession of all States would be a clear declaration of their rejection of the nuclear option and

an affirmation of their commitment to free our region of nuclear weapons. Our countries have worked hard to move these efforts from the regional level to the international level in order to bring about a nuclear-weapon-free world. Israel alone is delaying regional efforts by firmly holding on to the nuclear option and by rejecting accession to the NPT and the subjection of its nuclear facilities to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) full-scope safeguards. In that regard, the sixth NPT Review Conference called for adoption of the following in its final document.

(spoke in English)

> "The Conference recalls that operative paragraph 4 of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East 'calls upon all States in the Middle East that have not yet done so, without exception, to accede to the Treaty as soon as possible and to place their nuclear facilities under full-scope International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards'. The Conference notes, in this connection, that the report of the United Nations Secretariat on the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East (NPT/CONF.2000/7) states that several States have acceded to the Treaty and that, with these accessions, all States of the region of the Middle East, with the exception of Israel, are States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The Conference welcomes the accession of these States and reaffirms the importance of Israel's accession to the NPT and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive IAEA safeguards in realizing the goal of universal adherence to the Treaty in the Middle East." *(NPT/CONF.2000/28, Part I, p. 24, para. 16 (3))*

(spoke in Arabic)

Egypt attaches great importance to implementing the objectives and guidelines of nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament in the Middle East region and throughout the world. We believe that confronting the danger of nuclear-weapons proliferation in the Middle East is an urgent necessity. We should not drag our feet on this. Therefore, there have been many Egyptian initiatives to free the Middle East of nuclear threats and perils and the danger of maintaining in the region nuclear facilities that are not subject to full-scope IAEA safeguards. Since 1974 Egypt has submitted to the First Committee of the General Assembly a draft resolution establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. The resolution was adopted by consensus in 1980.

The General Assembly adopts annually, with an overwhelming majority, a resolution on the dangers of nuclear-weapon proliferation in the Middle East, and it calls upon Israel, as the only State in the Middle East that has not acceded to the NPT, to accede to the Treaty without delay and to declare its rejection of the nuclear option. Parallel to these efforts, President Mubarak of Egypt made a statement in April 1990 on his initiative calling for the Middle East to be freed of all weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery to preclude that danger, and as a natural extension of Egypt's invitation to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. In June 1998 he made a general proposal to hold an international conference to achieve a world free of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons.

To bring about nuclear disarmament and to establish the major relevant guidelines, the Egyptian Minister for Foreign Affairs participated with the Foreign Ministers of Brazil, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa and Sweden in issuing a declaration, in June 1998, entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda", which calls upon the international community, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, to accelerate steps to bring about nuclear disarmament.

The new agenda coalition States submitted a draft resolution to the General Assembly during the last two years concerning the necessity for nuclear-weapon States to declare their full and unconditional commitment to eliminate all nuclear weapons, calling upon them to take practical steps to achieve this as well as achieving universality of accession to the NPT. In this context, and within the framework of nuclear disarmament, I wish to state Egypt's support for the Secretary-General's proposal in his Millennium Summit report that a major international conference be held to consider means of eliminating nuclear weapons. We hope that such a conference will be held as soon as possible.

Confidence-building measures with regard to conventional weapons are an important disarmament issue, to which Egypt attaches great importance. Although the Disarmament Commission has considered it, we believe that many developments and inputs could

be reconsidered, in the hope of reaching agreement on guidelines on this matter. One of the issues that should be reconsidered within this framework is the degree of success of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as a confidence-building measure over past years. Egypt's assessment of the outcome of the meetings of governmental experts shows a failure to broaden the Register's scope to include military acquisitions from local production and manufacturing, as well as failure to include additional categories of weapons of mass destruction. Therefore, it has failed in its present format as an effective means of establishing confidence.

We believe that transparency in the area of weapons of mass destruction is as important as transparency in the area of conventional weapons. Security is indivisible and cannot be segmented. In this context, we hope that the governmental experts, who are currently holding meetings on this issue, will reach agreement on broadening the scope of the Register in the manner that I indicated earlier. Otherwise, its importance as a confidence-building measure will be lessened, since the categories that the Register includes today cannot form the basis for achieving confidence-building measures.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): May I also congratulate Mr. Zarif, Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on his assumption of the chair of the 2000 Disarmament Commission. I also congratulate the Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons of the two Working Groups, as well as the other members of the Bureau. They are all assured of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

If we are honest with ourselves, we must concede that the inability of the multilateral forums and the international community to substantively address some of the most central issues of our day reflects a deepening crisis in international relations, non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control. The inability of the Conference on Disarmament to start its work and the fact that most First Committee resolutions do not enjoy the support of all Member States and that the work of this Commission is often ignored are reasons for concern.

Part of the problem is that these disarmament mechanisms were created many years ago and do not reflect today's realities in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. This Commission was created at the height of the cold war in 1978, at a time when the Conference on Disarmament was comprised of only a few members. At that time disarmament negotiations were the prerogative of only a few States; hence the Disarmament Commission was created as a body to consider and make recommendations on various problems in the field of disarmament. The situation is slightly different today. Although still not open to participation by all Member States, the Conference on Disarmament now has 66 members and represents a broader political spectrum.

The 2000 Disarmament Commission will be the first to focus its consideration on only two disarmament issues. The South African delegation is hopeful that our deliberations over the next three years will identify ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament and to find achievable means to build confidence among States in the field of conventional weapons. All efforts should, however, be made to retain the Commission's relevancy through focused debates on these two agenda items. The fact that the Commission, after four years of deliberations, could not agree to convene a fourth special session on disarmament, not only weakened the value of the Commission as a disarmament forum, but clearly identified the need to review the working methods of this body. Careful consideration should be given to a mechanism that would reflect our deliberations at the end of three years without wasting valuable time and resources on unnecessary complicated negotiations.

Nuclear disarmament is considered by all States to be one of the most important among the disarmament issues facing the international community. Moreover, nuclear disarmament is a concern of the entire international community. A source of concern for South Africa, however, is the continuing refusal to recognize that this is indeed the case. The long and frustrating negotiations to formulate an agenda item for this Commission's consideration on an issue that is of global concern is indicative of the lack of commitment to achieve progress in the field of nuclear disarmament.

South Africa is pleased with the outcome of the recent 2000 Review Conference of the States parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, at which the nuclear-weapon States made an unequivocal commitment to the total elimination of their nuclear weapons — an important political step, indeed. We welcome the undertakings by the nuclear-weapon

States to further reduce their nuclear arsenals unilaterally to increase transparency with regard to their nuclear-weapon capabilities, to further reduce non-strategic weapons and to diminish the role for nuclear weapons in security policies, as well as their undertaking that all five nuclear-weapon States will be engaged in the process leading to the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals.

These undertakings, as well as the agreement on the establishment of an appropriate subsidiary body in the Conference on Disarmament to deal with nuclear disarmament and the agreement that a non-discriminatory, multilateral and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices will be negotiated within five years, would provide much needed momentum for progress in the field of nuclear disarmament. However, much remains to be done to ensure a nuclear-weapon-free world. Concrete agreed measures to reduce the operational status of nuclear-weapon systems, such as de-alerting and removal of nuclear warheads from their delivery systems, are urgently required.

Our deliberations on ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament should build upon, but in no way diminish, the undertakings given and agreements reached at the recent NPT Review Conference on a substantive agenda for nuclear disarmament. South Africa will not lend its support to any outcome of these deliberations that will undermine the success achieved at that Conference. Our deliberations should be in support of the process in the Conference on Disarmament, and we should consider other tangible ways and means to positively address the core elements required to facilitate action and results in moving our disarmament agenda forward.

Although nuclear weapons constitute the greatest threat to the survival of mankind, the build-up of conventional weapons beyond a level which can be considered legitimate for the purposes of self-defence creates an unstable environment, in particular in areas where regional instability leads to regional conflicts. Conventional weapons, particularly small arms and light weapons, are the source of most of the death and suffering caused in conflicts around the world today. The rebuilding and prosperity of society which is gained from various peace and democratization initiatives is curtailed by the accompanying proliferation of these weapons.

The excessive and destabilizing accumulation of conventional weapons negatively impacts on confidence among States, especially among neighbouring States. The underpinning factor to practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons would be transparency. Transparency is a useful technique for building mutual confidence whereby non-hostile intentions can be communicated, "worst case" estimates can be deflated and verification can be promoted, and it can provide for the timely detection of destabilizing accumulations of weapons.

Our deliberations on this topic should, however, supplement and draw upon work already done by the Disarmament Commission at previous sessions, the Conference on Disarmament and United Nations study groups, as well as upon the experiences of individual States in this regard. We should also bear in mind the preparations for and the convening of the 2001 international conference on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. My delegation believes that the 2001 conference should consider concrete measures to enhance transparency in the trade in small arms and light weapons, with a view to building confidence among States.

I recall that the South African delegation at the 1998 session of the Commission circulated a working paper on my Government's policy on transparency in armaments. In addition to the annual submission of data on the transfer of weapons falling within the seven categories of the conventional arms Register, my delegation believes that a similar reporting system on other categories of weapons, such as small arms, light weapons, explosives and non-lethal military equipment, either as part of the current Register or in the form of a separate new register, would further enhance confidence among States. The scope of the current Register is too narrow; it does not include types of weapons, such as small arms and light weapons, that are mainly utilized to destabilize countries in many regions of the world. South African and other African experts participating in the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts on the improved operation of the Register have consistently argued that the lack of participation by smaller countries in the Register, particularly from Africa, is mainly due to the narrow scope of the current Register.

Another practical and tangible measure to promote confidence among States in the field of

conventional arms is the destruction of surplus, confiscated or collected weapons, no longer in use by Government forces. In this regard, I recall the Secretary-General's report on small arms (A/52/298), in which he recommended, among other things, that States should exercise restraint in the transfer of surplus small arms manufactured solely for possession and use by the military and police forces. The report also recommended that all States should consider the possibility of destroying all surplus small arms. To this end, the South African Police Services have already destroyed several tons of surplus arms, in 1997. My Government furthermore decided to destroy all other surplus arms rather than sell them. Studies on the legal and technical implications of this destruction process are in the process of completion, and these weapons will soon be destroyed in a transparent manner. We are encouraged that a number of other States have implemented similar policies and similar actions.

The South African Government's policies on destruction of surplus weapons, as well as the cooperative agreements with some of our neighbouring States to destroy collected or confiscated weapons, formed the basis of the call in General Assembly resolution 54/54 R, "Illicit traffic in small arms", in which States were encouraged to take appropriate national measures to destroy surplus confiscated or collected small arms and light weapons, and to provide, on a voluntary basis, information to the Secretary-General on types and quantities destroyed. The destruction of surplus, confiscated or collected weapons, together with an appropriate reporting system on this process would most certainly promote confidence among States in support of regional stability. It would also provide the means to limit the illicit traffic in these weapons. My delegation will, in the course of the Commission's deliberations on this topic, submit concrete proposals on ways to build confidence among States through the destruction of surplus confiscated or collected weapons.

South Africa remains committed to working in this Commission and in all other disarmament and non-proliferation forums to achieve the total elimination of all nuclear weapons and to limit the numbers of conventional weapons to the minimum required for self-defence.

Mr. Benítez-Sáenz (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish at the outset to extend to the Chairman my best wishes in chairing the work of the Disarmament Commission. We also wish to extend our gratitude to his predecessor, and in particular to Minister Angélica Arce of Mexico, who has played a very important role in the work of this Commission.

It is a particular source of pride that Argentina is chairing the Working Group on confidence-building measures, and we wish it great success, as we do Ghana, which is chairing the Working Group on nuclear disarmament.

The Disarmament Commission is meeting at a significant time. Over a month ago we saw the conclusion of the sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and we achieved a Final Document at the Conference, which has never happened before. For Uruguay, the leading role played by countries that make up the coalition for a new agenda as a driving force of the Conference was particularly important. We vigorously supported its proposal, because we feel it will pave the way for disarmament in the coming years.

In the middle of May the non-nuclear-weapon States saw an unequivocal commitment by those States that still maintain nuclear arsenals to achieve significant process in order to limit and eliminate such arsenals. It is not right that these arsenals still exist, without our having a clear idea how long they will continue to be on the face of the earth.

In the midst of this whole debate, the Disarmament Commission, the only universal forum dealing with this important topic, has the responsibility of appealing to the Conference on Disarmament to unblock the initiative to draft a Convention banning the use of nuclear weapons. The call for the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) continues to grow. My country, aware of its responsibility in this area, ratified the Treaty on 20 June, as a way of contributing to this important process. We are also very pleased that included in the Secretary-General's initiative to identify the 25 most important treaties for the next millennium are a large number of treaties related to disarmament.

At the same time, we eagerly await the upcoming Millennium Summit, with the understanding that it will result in a renewed commitment to eliminating weapons of mass destruction. We fervently support the Secretary-General's call for an international conference to deal with this matter.

This year the Commission will begin a new cycle of work in order to tackle its disarmament responsibilities. We hope that the new themes for discussion will allow us to make a significant contribution to achieving the progress that we all want. Uruguay feels that these approaches should result in this forum providing the international community with significant guidelines for reformulating the concept of arms limitation and promoting real progress in this area.

In October 1995, in Punta del Este, Uruguay, experts of the Rio Group and the European Union met for the first time to discuss confidence-building mechanisms. As of yesterday Argentina is chairing the Working Group of this Commission to establish methods for enhancing transparency at all levels. We trust in the work of our Argentine brothers, and are convinced that the achievements of MERCOSUR — including bilateral cooperation to make training for peacekeeping operations more efficient — along with other regional efforts, will make a constructive contribution to the cause of complete and universal disarmament.

Another important advance in this area is the German initiative — which we have followed from its inception — on the consolidation of peace through practical confidence-building measures. This initiative has already produced specific results.

The international community is also preparing a conference on small arms, which will take place next year. The hemisphere's contribution — the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Illegal Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials — is one of the foundations for this work. The Convention is complemented by the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions, which further strengthens cooperation among our countries.

In conclusion, Uruguay attaches the utmost importance to the Disarmament Commission, and we are convinced that in coming years it will have to take a vigorous stand in order to avoid the resumption of arms races, which we had considered things of the past.

Mr. Picasso (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me first to congratulate the Chairman on his election for the year 2000 session. We also extend our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau, and acknowledge the valuable work done by Ambassador Abdelaziz and by Minister Angélica Arce in their work as Chairman and Acting Vice-Chairperson, respectively, of the Disarmament Commission.

We are beginning this session of the Disarmament Commission with a paradoxical mix of optimism and expectation, uncertainty and concern. The source of the expectations is the significant results of the recent Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), at which we were able to achieve a consensus among the States parties and a Final Document which establishes commitments for the future on the part of the nuclear-weapon States and can be seen as a very positive and pragmatic step forward.

Nevertheless, in the nuclear field there also remain problems, such as the reaffirmation and strengthening of nuclear doctrines, the lack of concrete measures to reduce the possibility of a nuclear war, risks to the ongoing viability of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, as well as the lack of a commitment to unblock negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament.

We reaffirm in this context that there is no reason to believe that the indefinite possession of such weapons is justified. We are ready to continue working to achieve the total elimination of the nuclear arsenals. In this respect, we join other delegations in supporting the Secretary-General's idea, contained in his report for the Millennium Summit, of an international conference to help identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers.

Ways to advance the nuclear disarmament effort include the prompt signing and ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) by States that have yet to do so; the strengthening and consolidation of the existing nuclear-weapon-free zones; and the creation of new nuclear-weapon-free zones.

Our delegation is pleased to consider confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms, because these are concrete measures that would complement the initiatives to limit arms and reduce military spending. We welcome the fact that the Chairman of the Working Group concerned is the representative of Argentina, a country with which we share extensive bilateral experience in this field.

For Peru, confidence-building measures go beyond the military dimension. We believe there is a need to explore the effectiveness of non-military measures, such as political, economic, social and cultural processes involving a wide range of actors within society in an ongoing process of feedback, and in a specific regional context. Beginning with this wider view of the concept of confidence-building measures, our region has promoted the adoption of different mechanisms for cooperation and integration — without overlooking the traditional military field, for which the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions provides an essential foundation.

Peru also places great importance on bilateral relations in this area. We have established confidence-building measures with our neighbours — Ecuador, Colombia, Brazil, Bolivia and Chile, as well as Argentina and Venezuela — with which we carry out tasks designed to strengthen democracy and enhance the security of our citizens and cooperation in dealing with the wide range of mutual dangers, regarding which many options remain to be explored.

On the global level, we emphasize the importance of the role of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms — a concrete confidence-building measure which can still be improved. Peru has participated in the Register, submitting annual and timely information, since its inception. In addition, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction is a substantive contribution to creating an environment of security and trust.

Peru would like to reaffirm the role of the Disarmament Commission as the appropriate forum for open dialogue and debate in this area. We are prepared to cooperate fully in the work that needs to be done this year.

Mr. Suh (Republic of Korea): On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Korea, I would like to join previous speakers in extending our warmest congratulations to Ambassador Zarif on his election as Chairman of the 2000 session of the Disarmament Commission. I am confident that his able leadership and vast experience will steer our deliberations to a productive outcome. Please be assured of my delegation's full support and cooperation as we work to ensure the success of our session.

The Disarmament Commission has played an important role as a deliberative body in the field of disarmament. Over the years, the Commission has elaborated guidelines for common ground on many issues. This year we have two agenda items before us: first, ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament; and secondly, practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. My delegation looks forward to our putting together a practical programme of work on these two issues after our substantive deliberations.

The adoption by consensus of the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) last month was a highly significant step towards strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime in the years ahead. In particular, the agreement by the Conference on practical steps for systematic and progressive efforts to implement article VI of the NPT and the 1995 decision on "Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament" has boosted our expectations concerning the prospects for nuclear disarmament.

At the heart of these efforts lies the unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, leading to nuclear disarmament. While recognizing that significant progress has been made thus far, my delegation feels that nuclear-weapon States should make even greater efforts to translate their commitments into concrete action.

Meanwhile, recognizing that nuclear disarmament is a complex and delicate process closely linked to global strategic relations, my delegation believes that a practical, step-by-step approach is called for. In this respect, the START process should be revitalized through the earliest possible entry into force of START II. My delegation welcomes the recent ratification of START II by the Russian Federation, and looks forward to early implementation of the Treaty. Furthermore, we hope that the United States and Russia will commence and conclude negotiations on START III as soon as possible. This would contribute to further reductions in nuclear arsenals.

At the same time, we believe that as a confidence-building measure leading to nuclear disarmament further efforts could be made voluntarily to increase transparency with regard to nuclear-

weapons capabilities and to diminishing the role of nuclear weapons in the security policies of nuclear-weapon States.

We attach great importance to the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). In this regard, we call upon all States that have not yet signed and ratified the Treaty, especially those among the 44 States whose adherence is required for the Treaty's entry into force, to do so without further delay. The nuclear-weapon States should provide the leadership for facilitating the entry into force of the CTBT. All States concerned should place moratoriums on nuclear tests pending the entry into force of the CTBT.

The fissile material cut-off treaty would enhance non-proliferation and is an essential element underpinning nuclear disarmament. We believe that negotiations on this treaty should commence immediately on the basis of the 1995 Shannon mandate. All States concerned are called upon to place moratoriums on the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons.

Our deliberations in the Commission should be on the achievements of the NPT Review Conference last month, and should complement the work of the Conference on Disarmament, thereby avoiding duplication.

Let me now turn to confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. The primary goal of confidence-building measures is to reduce the risk of armed conflicts among States by diminishing mistrust, misunderstanding and miscalculation. Confidence-building measures will enhance peace and stability, and will facilitate disarmament among States. Embracing military and non-military aspects, confidence-building measures should be applied in a comprehensive manner.

The Disarmament Commission, for its part, has adopted two sets of guidelines relating to confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms: the 1996 Guidelines for arms transfers and the 1999 Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N. The former — the first code of conduct in this area — has contributed to enhancing transparency in international arms transfers and to eradicating illicit arms transfers. The latter is expected to play an important role in consolidating peace, especially in post-conflict situations. We support these guidelines and look forward to their observance.

As my delegation considers transparency in armaments to be a fundamental instrument in building confidence among States, we are of the view that the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is an effective tool for promoting an enhanced level of confidence among States. We therefore support efforts to consolidate and further develop the Register and hope to see wider participation among States.

Among conventional weapons, small arms and light weapons have recently received considerable attention from the international community, owing to their prevalence in modern conflicts. In this regard, my delegation welcomes the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, which was submitted in August 1999, which contains recommendations on confidence-building in terms of both reduction and prevention measures. The 2001 United Nations conference on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects will provide the opportunity to devise a plan of action to address the issue of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. If adopted, the plan of action will be an important milestone in our efforts to curb the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and to build confidence among States on the global level. We look forward to the successful outcome of the conference.

Since security situations differ from region to region, confidence-building measures will obviously not be the same everywhere. However, there are two universal characteristics of confidence-building measures: transparency and openness. As for specific measures, advance notification and observation of military manoeuvres, mutual visits by military personnel, the establishment of hotlines and the exchange of military information can be key confidence-building elements.

As the Asia-Pacific region is characterized by a diversity of political systems, levels of economic development and cultural and historical backgrounds, confidence-building measures that span the entire region have been difficult to establish. However, since its inception in 1994, the Association of South-East Asian Nations Regional Forum (ARF) has provided a useful framework for region-wide security dialogue.

and has made significant progress in developing and implementing various confidence-building measures.

For its part, the Korean Government has been participating actively in this process and, in collaboration with the Malaysian Government, will host an inter-sessional meeting of the ARF on confidence-building, in Seoul in November 2000.

The Disarmament Commission has taken up some very important issues on the international disarmament agenda. Indeed, the two issues before us today carry great significance for global peace and security. I would like to reaffirm that my delegation will play a constructive role throughout our deliberations. We will give our full cooperation and support to the Commission in the hope that it can make a useful contribution to the promotion of peace and security by devising practical confidence-building measures for a new era.

Mr. Niehaus (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me first of all to congratulate Ambassador Zarif, and through him Iran, on his well-deserved election to preside over the work of this Commission. We are convinced that his well-known skill will ensure the success of our work. In this regard, we assure him of the continued cooperation of our delegation. We would also like to extend our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau.

The Disarmament Commission, as a specialized multilateral decision-making mechanism, is the ideal body to promote disarmament in all of its forms. We welcome that this year one of the Commission's Working Groups is dedicated to reviewing practical ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament. Undoubtedly, that discussion will serve as a follow-up to the recent successful 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). In this context, my delegation supports the renewed commitment of the States parties to the NPT to adopt a range of practical measures in order to make progress on the common objective of eliminating nuclear weapons, with a view to complying with the obligation contained in article VI of the Treaty and to continuing negotiations to achieve complete nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control.

Among the possible measures designed to achieve nuclear disarmament, we believe that priority should be given to the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), as well as to beginning negotiations on an international instrument to prohibit the production of fissile material.

Furthermore, the nuclear-weapon States should truly commit themselves to disarmament negotiations. It is crucial that they deactivate their defensive systems and halt their programmes to modernize their nuclear arsenals. These States must also adopt a no-first-use policy and begin a gradual, systematic and steadfast process of dismantling their arsenals of weapons of mass destruction. The nuclear-weapon States must also prohibit the transfer of technology, knowledge and material related to the development of nuclear arms.

Today, the nuclear-weapon States' obligation to adopt disarmament measures is becoming more relevant. We are living under the threat of a new arms race, fuelled by the development of nuclear weapons by some States that are not party to the NPT, as well as by the ambition of other States to develop anti-missile defence systems.

Costa Rica, as a member of the nuclear-weapon-free zone of Latin America, firmly supports the creation and consolidation of nuclear-weapon-free zones. My country is honoured to be part of the historic Treaty of Tlatelolco which established the first such zone. We understand the positive contribution of nuclear-weapon-free zones to global peace and security. And thus we urgently call on the international community to heed the desire of those States that wish to create new zones.

Costa Rica is known as an unarmed, civilian democracy that has made disarmament a fundamental and important pillar of its foreign policy. This is a logical extension of our domestic policy. It is for this reason that the foreign policy of our country must reflect and promote the national values that define it, for which it is necessary to establish instruments and strategies to promote Costa Rica's position in this regard within the international system. For these purposes, my country has played an innovative international role, well-suited to addressing the new challenges of the twenty-first century. This has involved promoting democratic peace and the renunciation of arms, not only in every country but also among countries and institutions of the international system. Our historic mission and our stand must be based on the fact that a greater commitment to unarmed

democracy and peace reduce the possibility of being attacked or becoming victims of conflicts.

My delegation is also pleased that during this session the Commission is to consider practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. In my country we are convinced that the first step to increase confidence is to limit arms transfers and to promote transparency regarding arsenals. The historical experience of Central America has taught us that the accumulation of arms and munitions is a true obstacle to the peace process and a direct threat to all countries adjoining conflict areas.

Arms trafficking leads to political instability, organized crime and human rights violations. We have to begin an international campaign to stop the illicit trafficking in small arms and their ammunition. We should also make additional efforts in the area of customs and border controls, police cooperation and the proper registration of every weapon. Countries that produce and sell arms must exercise effective control over their exports and adopt measures to combat the manufacture and illegal sale of weapons. We must collect, confiscate and destroy surplus small arms. We must also prevent authorized transfers of weapons from being diverted.

It is also essential to reduce arms manufacturing and seriously begin converting the arms industry. In each of our States we have to set restrictions on the production, possession and trade of small arms, in order to prevent them from being used in crime or rebellion.

With a view to enhancing confidence among States and promoting peace, we must prohibit the transfer of military material and personnel, as well as financial and logistic support, to those States whose military or paramilitary units or security forces are committing or contributing to human rights violations. This prohibition should also be extended to those States that do not respect the minimum democratic and civic guarantees.

As regards transparency, we have to prohibit the export of arms to countries that do not report their transfers to the United Nations, as well as to States that have not signed the main human rights, international humanitarian law and disarmament instruments. In this context, we support the initiative of an international code of conduct on arms transfers, to be found in document A/54/766. Reconstruction, reconciliation and normalization between and within nations that have been victims of armed conflicts should also be promoted. We know that war often leads to other wars; armed conflicts feed deep-rooted hatreds and lead to reprisals. As a result, peace requires a conscious effort to achieve reconciliation and brotherhood among all men and women.

I wish to conclude by repeating that our country has made disarmament something more than an objective of its foreign policy. My country is very interested in becoming a member of the Conference on Disarmament. For over 50 years Costa Rica has had no arms spending, and it devotes its public budget to education, preventive health and investment in the infrastructure. Our national experience has taught us that not investing in arms is the only viable alternative for those countries that are truly committed to the well-being of their peoples. We believe that the promotion of peace and security, both internationally and domestically, requires a resolute policy to reduce military spending and to strengthen the civil power. For this reason, we know that disarmament, demilitarization and the reduction of military spending are indispensable for the well-being of humankind and the promotion of peace.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, from the Arms Control Bureau of the Department of State.

Mr. Corden (United States of America): The United States delegation is pleased to see the Chairman, you, Sir, and other members of the Bureau in place to take up the work of the Disarmament Commission for 2000. We pledge you our support.

This year we begin consideration of two new items, one "nuclear" and one "conventional", reflecting the breadth and interrelationship of issues that are taken up by multilateral bodies devoted to strengthening international security, especially when dealing with weapons.

After more than half a century of study and deliberative efforts under the auspices of the United Nations, not to mention bilateral negotiations and multilateral negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament and elsewhere, there is a very large body of information and results on which to base our agreed work, looking towards the new millennium on which we are embarking. It is also worth recalling the efforts

prior to the establishment of the United Nations, some of which, like the Geneva Protocol of 1925, have continuing force today, and some of which are salutary if we can learn from their failure. The fact that a number of the arms control agreements negotiated between the world wars did not stand the test of time should give us pause. As the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs reminded us yesterday, momentum can be lost. Dedication to achieving the next practical steps is a matter for constant renewal.

Our agenda item concerning ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament is one with perhaps the greatest amount of material readily available for the work of this Commission, it having preoccupied so many for so long since the advent of the nuclear age. This means as well that it may prove especially challenging to break new ground. Indeed, many speakers here have already pointed to the remarkable success of the sixth Review Conference of States Parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), at which the United States outlined in considerable detail both the accomplishments that it has been party to, and its views on the ways and means to move ahead. There would be little point in rehearsing these accomplishments and views today, with the exception of the observation that the United States interventions at that Conference, and its concluding document, made clear the nuclear disarmament steps that the United States supports. Within the Working Group dealing with this item, we will be prepared to discuss our specific views in greater depth and to make available a detailed accounting of how much progress has been achieved with respect to the undertaking of all NPT parties in its article VI.

However, there are three issues that warrant comment at this time. First, as Secretary Albright made clear at the NPT Review Conference, in the wake of the vote of the United States Senate not to give its advice and consent to ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the United States is continuing to work for our eventual ratification of this key step in the process of nuclear disarmament. The former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John Shalikashvili, as Special Adviser to the President and Secretary of State, is pursuing his mission to lay the groundwork for this outcome. The United States is respecting the moratorium on nuclear explosions it initiated in 1992, and has called on States to sign and ratify the CTBT, and in the interim not to carry out nuclear explosions. The United States has continued to support the work of the CTBT's Preparatory Commission. We have welcomed the steps leading to ratification by others, in particular the Russian Federation, and, as I noted this morning, now Uruguay, and we look forward to similar positive action, especially by others of the 44 States whose deposit of instruments of ratification is required for entry into force. Similarly, we welcome the indication that China may accelerate its ratification of the CTBT.

Secondly, the head of the delegation of China, Ambassador Shen, yesterday spoke to the impasse currently existing in the Conference on Disarmament on resuming negotiations on the next multilateral step in the nuclear disarmament process, the fissile material cut-off treaty. Needless to say, the United States has a decidedly different view of the reasons why progress has been blocked in Geneva. We fail to see how it makes sense to block progress on an issue of such importance, where consensus exists, by linking it to another item where it is well known that consensus has not been established. The United States has sought to demonstrate flexibility in developing a consensus on the programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament; it looks to others to be similarly flexible.

Thirdly, Ambassador Shen characterized United States work on a programme for developing a limited national missile defence as a unilateral nuclear arms expansion in another form. We would strongly disagree with such a characterization of a non-nuclear programme designed to counter certain limited threats. These threats could themselves be nuclear and be the result of proliferation in a world quite different from that in 1972 when the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty was concluded. As Secretary of State Albright made clear at the NPT Review Conference,

> "if the Clinton Administration were bent on sabotaging the ABM Treaty and strategic arms control, we have surely gone about it in a strange way — in the open, with care, and in consultation not only with Congress, but after extensive discussions with our allies and other countries, Russia and China emphatically included".

With respect to the agenda item, "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms", previous speakers, including the representatives of the European Union and of Argentina, have given useful accounts of the

remarkable developments over the past 15 years or so, with the Stockholm Conference of 1986 as the benchmark. Speakers have also pointed to the importance of focusing on regional developments and of taking into account regional differences.

The United States delegation agrees that a great deal of progress has been achieved since Stockholm. There is no doubt that regions have proceeded at different paces, and this is understandable. We should review the progress that has been achieved and, in seeking to apply this progress, keep regional variations carefully in mind. As the title for this item makes clear, the focus of our deliberations should be on practical measures.

We believe that the Working Group should study ways to encourage confidence-building measures that contribute to regional and international peace and security. In studying current confidence-building measures — or, somewhat more broadly, confidence- and security-building measures — with respect to conventional arms, the Commission could usefully catalogue what has already been or is being pursued in various forums, including those in a regional context.

Our delegation looks forward to pursuing our work over the coming days.

Mr. Mohammad Kamal (Malaysia): I join other delegations in congratulating the Chairman on his election, confident in the knowledge that he will be able to guide our work to a fruitful conclusion. We also congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election. I take this opportunity to record our appreciation for the untiring efforts and contribution of the Chairman's predecessor, Mr. Maged Abdelaziz of Egypt.

The ultimate goal of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, through their systematic and progressive reduction, remains one of the priority tasks of the international community. What we have been witnessing are promises made by the nuclear-weapon States to move towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, juxtaposed against the reality of national and regional security needs based on the continued possession of nuclear weapons and their qualitative improvements. We are justified in asking the question: Wherein lies the commitment needed in order to move towards the realization of a nuclear-weapon-free world through the total elimination of nuclear weapons? The outlook for nuclear disarmament for the foreseeable future therefore remains bleak. The established nuclear-weapon States still cling in blind faith to their doctrine of nuclear deterrence, in the belief that nuclear weapons remain essential for their national security, thereby encouraging others to aspire to similar status for the same reason, which, however, is frowned upon.

At the Conference on Disarmament the start of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material, which in the autumn of 1998 had seemed possible, is yet to materialize. The Conference on Disarmament also failed, yet again, to agree on a programme of work.

A further setback is the ongoing controversy over the issue of the development of national and theatre missile defence systems, which, if pursued, will only destabilize the nuclear equilibrium and raise questions about the viability of current disarmament instruments and mechanisms.

Clearly, these developments do not augur well for the future of disarmament. Despite assurances by States with nuclear capabilities of their commitment towards disarmament, their actions, regrettably, have not matched their words. Are these not manifestations of the world sliding, inadvertently or otherwise, down the path of nuclear proliferation? Unless concerted actions are taken, and taken soon, to reverse this dangerous trend, existing nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regimes could very well become hollow instruments.

The cavalier attitude of the nuclear-weapon States towards nuclear disarmament is likely to undermine existing nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regimes. It makes a mockery of non-nuclear States signing and ratifying treaties and protocols to restrict and control nuclear capabilities which they do not even possess to begin with. Over time, they will begin to question the usefulness of those treaties and conventions, and of their own participation in them.

In contemplating ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament, it is worthwhile recalling the historic advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ). In one of the most significant and important milestones in the development of international law, the Court found that the use of nuclear weapons seems scarcely reconcilable with the provisions of humanitarian law protecting civilians and combatants from unnecessary and indiscriminate effects of warfare, and further found that nuclear-

weapon States had demonstrated no justifying circumstances of self-defence, in which the survival of a State would be at stake. Without being asked to do so, the Court also gave its opinion on the meaning of article VI of the NPT, which calls for good-faith negotiations towards nuclear disarmament. It stated in paragraph 2F of the disposition, which was endorsed by every judge:

> "There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control."

We should take to heart the pertinent words of the President of the World Court, Judge Mohammad Bedjaoui of Algeria, who asked us to address the issue of nuclear weapons and to endeavour to correct the imperfections of an international law which is ultimately no more than the creation of the States themselves.

On the positive side, a number of developments ought to be applauded. The Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a major disarmament achievement that must be recognized. While it still awaits the required number of ratifications before its entry into force, we should welcome its ratification by the Russian Duma in April this year as a positive contribution towards that goal. Against the Russian decision, the earlier decision by the United States Senate not to ratify the CTBT was a disappointing let-down, especially when the international community had looked to the United States for leadership on this important matter. It is to be hoped that the United States Senate will put matters right by ratifying the Treaty at the next opportune moment. In this regard, we take note of the statement just delivered by the United States representative that

> "the United States is continuing to work for our eventual ratification of this key step in the process of nuclear disarmament".

My delegation is also gratified by the positive developments in respect of nuclear-weapon-free zones, especially with the establishment of such zones in Africa and South-East Asia, which, together with those in the South Pacific and South America, would form contiguous nuclear-weapon-free zones spanning the southern hemisphere. Progress in the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones is gratifying indeed and reflects positively on the continuing commitment of the non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty. So far more than a hundred non-nuclear-weapon States in four continents are covered under the nuclear-weapon-free-zone umbrella. There has also been encouraging progress in the creation of a Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone treaty and in the acceptance of the innovative concept of a single-State weapon-free zone, initiated by Mongolia. Similarly, the equally innovative proposal by Belarus for a nuclear-weapon-free corridor merits serious consideration as part of a global concerted effort towards nuclear disarmament. We look forward to the establishment of other nuclear-weapon-free zones in other regions, including the Middle East and South Asia.

My delegation accepts that many States depend on arms imports to ensure a reasonable level of security, and the inherent right of self-defence is recognized in the United Nations Charter. Unfortunately, arms purchases for legitimate national defence very often trigger an arms race, especially in regions in which there are underlying tensions in relations between the regional States. Hence, there is an imperative need for concrete confidence-building measures between these States so as to resolve, or at least manage, these underlying tensions. We believe progress in this area is possible on the basis of increased transparency and consultation between neighbours.

The Secretary-General stated in his last report on the work of the Organization (A/54/1) that during the 1990s we have witnessed major changes in the patterns of global conflict and in the international community's responses to them. Today, more than 90 per cent of armed conflicts take place within, rather than between, States. In his report to the Millennium Assembly (A/54/2000), he indicated that the death toll from small arms dwarfs that of all other weapons systems — and in most years greatly exceeds the toll of the atomic bombs that devastated Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In terms of the carnage they cause, small arms, indeed, could well be described as weapons of mass destruction. Yet there is still no global non-proliferation regime to limit their spread, as there is for chemical, biological and nuclear weapons.

The world community has clearly decided that it will no longer turn a blind eye to the costs that small arms and light weapons are imposing on human security and sustainable development. In his 1998 report (A/53/1), the Secretary-General noted that 90

per cent of those killed or wounded in conflicts involving light military weapons are civilians, and that 80 per cent of them are women and children. In his report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871), the Secretary-General concluded that improvements in transparency, particularly with respect to the activities of international arms merchants, would do more to combat the flow of illicit arms into Africa than any other single initiative.

The principle of transparency should be extended to international transfers of conventional weapons and associated military technology. As a step in this direction, Malaysia continues to support the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, which provides for a confidence-building and transparency measure for States. The Register's existence will continue to alert the international community to attempts by any State to build up holdings of conventional weapons beyond a reasonable level. Information should be provided by all States on a regular basis after transfers have taken place. My delegation also urges greater openness on overall holdings of conventional weapons. We believe the provision of such data, and a procedure for seeking clarification, would be a valuable confidence- and security-building measure.

The principle of consultation should now be strengthened through the opening of discussions on this subject in this forum, as should the rapid implementation of recent initiatives among leading arms exporters, with the aim of agreeing on a common approach to the guidelines applied in the transfer of conventional weapons. As I mentioned earlier, there is still no global non-proliferation regime to limit the spread of these weapons, as there is for chemical, biological and nuclear weapons. Each of us should continue to play a constructive part in this important process in this and other appropriate forums.

If we are serious about conventional disarmament, each of us should play our part to prevent the building up of disproportionate arsenals. To that end, all countries should refrain from arms transfers which would be destabilizing or would exacerbate existing tensions. Special restraint should be exercised in the transfer of advanced technology weapons and in sales to countries and areas of particular concern. A special effort should be made to define sensitive items and production capacity for advanced weapons, to the transfer of which similar restraints could be applied. All States should take steps to ensure that these criteria are strictly enforced. We intend to give these issues our continuing close attention.

Advocacy of these practical disarmament measures need not interfere with or compromise the inherent right of self-defence, nor need such measures detract attention from nuclear disarmament. To the contrary, such measures promote both world peace and development. They constitute an issue with auspicious prospects for North-South cooperation. It is highly appropriate, therefore, that the Disarmament Commission will now seek to develop a consensus around further initiatives that may be taken in the growing field of the consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures.

There is no dearth of ideas on how to propel the disarmament process forward. The problem that we face is not a lack of ideas. It is the lack of political will to move the process forward. If we wish to ensure the success of this Commission, all Member States, particularly the nuclear-weapon and arms-producing States, must manifest this political will. We believe it is within their power, singly or collectively as a group, to create the conditions — not overnight, but in the foreseeable future — for the attainment of the goals with regard to complete nuclear disarmament and dealing with the proliferation of conventional arms. With the desired political will and a creative approach, the end goal is attainable. In this regard, we commend the Secretary-General for highlighting disarmament issues in his recent Millennium report.

There are other equally important issues which I have not highlighted here, for the sake of brevity. We will do so at a later stage in the course of the Commission's deliberations.

Mr. Mesdoua (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): I am especially pleased to see Mr. Zarif presiding over the work of the Disarmament Commission and I would therefore like to take this opportunity to extend to him my most sincere congratulations and best wishes for success in his difficult task. I also seize this occasion to congratulate all the members of the Bureau and the Chairmen of the Working Groups and to assure them of my delegation's full support.

It is also my pleasant duty to convey our gratitude to Mr. Zarif's predecessor, the representative of Egypt,

our friend Maged Abdelaziz, for his excellent work as Chairman of the Commission at the previous session.

Finally, I congratulate Mr. Dhanapala for his consistent support of the Commission and, moreover, of other disarmament bodies and for his important contribution yesterday at the opening of our deliberations.

This substantive session of our Commission, the first of the millennium, is being held in the wake of the satisfying results obtained at the sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), at which all States parties showed that it is possible to achieve something when there is political will to do so. We cannot ignore the fact, however, that many developments of recent years are real causes for concern. These include the nuclear testing in South Asia, the lack of progress in drafting an agenda for the Conference on Disarmament and the rejection by the American Senate of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. These are all indicators of the long and difficult road to be travelled and the efforts to be made if mankind is to be rid of the nuclear threat.

That is why my delegation remains determined to work with other delegations and to make its contribution to a Commission that has become an important disarmament body. It remains the unique body in which all Member States have the opportunity to discuss and consider guidelines for the crucial problems of security and disarmament. We must therefore exploit the great potential of this body, the proof of which it has provided by achieving agreement, as it did in its sessions of 1996 and 1999, on such difficult questions as international arms transfers; the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned; and conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N.

Algeria believes that the two items on our agenda are of major importance. The first deals with ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament. Algeria is convinced that nuclear disarmament must remain an absolute priority and therefore continue to be accorded the special, sustained and specific attention of the international community, the United Nations and its organs entrusted with considering disarmament questions at this very critical time so that concrete measures can be adopted for dismantling all nuclear weapons.

In this respect, the nuclear disarmament process should therefore be firmly pursued at all levels: unilateral, bilateral and multilateral. While substantial reductions of nuclear arsenals are being agreed upon, and pending their total elimination, measures must be considered to prohibit, in all circumstances, the use or threat of use of these apocalyptic weapons against any non-nuclear-weapon State, as recalled by the International Court of Justice in its historic opinion of 8 July 1996.

The theory according to which nuclear disarmament falls within the exclusive purview of bilateral negotiations between nuclear-weapon States is neither acceptable nor defensible in either political or moral terms. Even if it were possible to obtain substantial results at the bilateral level in the reduction of weapons within the framework of the START agreements, it is indisputable that, in this era of globalization, security can be envisaged only in terms of collective security. It is pleasing to note, moreover, that the five nuclear-weapon States, at the sixth NPT Review Conference, committed themselves for the first time to eliminating totally their nuclear weapons.

On 30 July 1999, Algeria, motivated by that conviction, made a dual proposal for the establishment of ad hoc committees on disarmament and on the prohibition of the production of fissile material. We would express the wish that the efforts currently being made by the Belgian presidency of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva will further promote serious negotiations aimed at prohibiting the production of fissile material and will help to launch discussions on other aspects linked to nuclear disarmament, such as the question of negative security guarantees for non-nuclear-weapon States. In that regard, the Secretary-General's proposal on organizing a major international conference to eliminate nuclear threats is important and enjoys my country's support.

Algeria believes that the dynamics of disarmament will remain incomplete and unfinished so long as they do not encompass the question of conventional weapons, which has become particularly important to a growing number of States. These weapons feed and exacerbate — above all through illicit arms transfers — new, violent and often

transboundary phenomena, such as terrorism and drug-trafficking. This question is neither minor nor of secondary importance to the national security and stability of many countries. Through its various disarmament forums, the international community must take up and examine its many implications with due urgency and earnest. That is why Algeria supported the convening of a United Nations conference to consider the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. We will participate actively in the preparations for that conference.

The change in international relations has resulted in the release of an enormous surplus of military *matériel* and equipment. On 24 April 1998, when the Security Council was considering the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict in Africa, Algeria — which, within its geographical area, is the country that devotes the lowest portion of its gross domestic product to national defence — stressed its interest in his recommendation to lower weapons and munition spending to 1.5 per cent, even though that recommendation required further clarification and honing.

In that same statement to the Security Council, Algeria welcomed the proposal of the Secretary-General on the compilation, research and publication of information on arms trafficking, which feeds major international crime and terrorism. We felt that, to be effective, this proposal, which could be taken up by the Department for Disarmament Affairs, must nevertheless fall within the context of effective and disciplined cooperation from the international community aimed at dismantling and neutralizing networks of logistical support and distribution of weapons that help terrorist groups in their efforts to destabilize, destroy and kill.

Thus, my country could only support the inclusion on our agenda of the second substantive item on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. It goes without saying that confidence-building measures in this and other fields will have meaning and be implemented only when they are established voluntarily at the bilateral, subregional and regional levels.

Furthermore, these confidence-building measures must take into account the specific features of regions, and the conclusive experience acquired by several regions of the world, if it is to be useful to us in our thinking, cannot be imposed as a single model. Moreover, they cannot call into question the legitimate needs of States with respect to security and national defence. My delegation will make its contribution to and formulated proposals for the Working Group at the proper time.

The issues of disarmament and international security are inseparable from economic and social development, which is ultimately understood to be the foundation of peace and harmony between nations. At a time when threats are more global, but not necessarily military, and when underdevelopment and poverty are the root cause of many conflicts, it is legitimate that we, the developing countries, should expect far more than promises that are never kept. The most important confidence-building measure that our peoples expect is the support of the developed States for our efforts to eradicate poverty through the removal or easing of the debt burden that is jeopardizing the efforts of many developing countries. What value can we assign to confidence-building and disarmament measures — such as moratoriums, the destruction of surpluses or participation in arms registers — if they are not complemented by economic incentives for sustainable development? In that respect, the colossal sums generated by a reduction of weapons might, given the political will, be used to finance many development projects, improve the economic conditions of many countries and thereby ultimately contribute to creating collective security that could, potentially, launch a qualitatively new era for mankind.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.

United Nations A/CN.10/PV.238

General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

238th meeting

Tuesday, 27 June 2000, 3 p.m.

New York

Chairman: Mr. Zarif ..... (Islamic Republic of Iran)

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Estévez-López (Guatemala), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair

The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

General exchange of views (*continued*)

Ms. Ibraimova (Kyrgyzstan): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Ambassador Zarif on his election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission and to express confidence that under his guidance we will achieve substantive progress and success at this session. My felicitations also go to the other members of the Bureau.

This body's successful adoption last year of principles and guidelines for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is to be commended. Negotiated nuclear-weapon-free zones now cover the whole of the southern hemisphere, in addition to Antarctica, the sea bed and outer space, and constitute one of the most promising approaches to non-proliferation and disarmament. In this regard, the significant progress that has been made towards creating a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia is noteworthy. We in the Kyrgyz Republic believe that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in our region will strengthen peace and security at the regional and global levels.

Since 1994, the Kyrgyz Republic has been an untiring and diligent participant in the process of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. At the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Kyrgyzstan, together with Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, submitted a working paper on the Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone to Main Committee II. In paragraph 14 of the section of its Final Document on Article VII of the NPT and the security of non-nuclear-weapon States, the Review Conference supported the intention and commitment of the five Central Asian States to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region, welcomed the practical steps they had taken towards the implementation of the initiative, and noted with satisfaction the substantial progress they had made in drawing up and agreeing on a draft treaty on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia.

The Kyrgyz Republic would like to draw particular attention to the continued efforts, under United Nations auspices, of a working group on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. In July 1998, the working group held a meeting in Bishkek involving the five Central Asian States, the five nuclear-weapon States, the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency. The group has also held meetings in Geneva, Tashkent, New York and Sapporo, the most recent of which concluded in April 2000. As a result of these meetings, our States have produced an almost complete draft treaty establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia.

I would like to take this opportunity to express, on behalf of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, our sincere gratitude to the Member States which have

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been providing their firm support for the process of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. We are also very grateful to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Dhanapala, the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Government of Japan for their support of negotiations to establish such a zone. We would welcome the continued assistance of interested international organizations and States in this process. As a peace-loving country, Kyrgyzstan is dedicated to the cause of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, and will spare no effort to bring the work of creating a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia to fruition.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones play a major role in strengthening the global non-proliferation regime. However, horizontal non-proliferation alone will not make this world more secure; it must be accompanied by vertical non-proliferation and the reduction of nuclear stockpiles, with a view to their ultimate elimination. The Kyrgyz Republic is pleased to note that in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, the nuclear-weapon States agreed to a set of practical steps for systematic and progressive efforts to implement Article VI of the Treaty. In particular, the Kyrgyz Republic welcomes the unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, leading to nuclear disarmament, and their commitment to unilateral reductions, increased transparency, reduction of the operational status of nuclear weapons systems, their diminished role in security policies and the further reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons. The inclusion of non-strategic nuclear weapons is particularly noteworthy, and the Kyrgyz Republic shares the concern expressed by the Secretary-General in his report on the Millennium Assembly (A/54/2000) about the absence today of negotiations to reduce tactical nuclear weapons.

The commitment made by all States parties at the NPT Review Conference must now be implemented fully so as to ensure the vitality of the global non-proliferation regime. Kyrgyzstan attaches considerable importance to the full implementation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 54/54 A adopted last year.

Regrettably, world security is not only threatened by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; conventional weapons, such as small arms, light weapons and mines, have become a major menace, causing millions of civilian casualties. Illicit trafficking in small arms is often linked to international terrorism, with destabilizing and destructive effects in many countries in every region of the world. These weapons threaten security, exacerbate violence, increase human suffering and hinder social and economic development and stability. They hamper the implementation of peace agreements, the reconstruction and rehabilitation of countries and the restoration of normal life.

The ongoing civil strife in Afghanistan and the presence of armed militant groups in that region raises the spectre of the possibility of a wider regional war. My delegation has always stressed that the harmful effects of that conflict, including international terrorism, drug smuggling and illicit trafficking in small arms, are not confined by national borders or limited to the parties directly involved in the conflict. Indeed, they spilled over into the southern region of my country last fall, demonstrating the reality of the threat that this conflict causes to the surrounding region and the possibility that it could again trigger events disruptive to peaceful societies trying to build regional cooperation and improve the lives of their people.

As it did last year, Kyrgyzstan, in cooperation with its allies, stands ready to firmly oppose any attempts at international terrorism of any nature and any attempts to undermine its sovereignty and territorial integrity. In this regard, we would like to emphasize the importance for regional security of regional organizations, such as the "Shanghai Five" and the Treaty on Collective Security. The Kyrgyz Republic reiterates its condemnation of international terrorism and calls on this body to redouble its efforts to control illicit trafficking in small arms as a means of combating international terrorism. In this regard, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, as well as regional initiatives such as the European Union Code of Conduct on Arms Exports and the Inter-American Convention against Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials, ensure transparency and essential confidence-building measures. Kyrgyzstan fully supports these initiatives and commends the work of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms and appreciates its recommendations.

Our delegation welcomes the activities of the European Union Joint Action aimed at a comprehensive approach to small arms. We believe that technical and financial assistance to programmes related to the small arms problem, especially those of a preventive character, is of great importance. We also commend the practical disarmament measures undertaken by the group of interested States. The forthcoming United Nations conference on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects will provide an important forum to translate our concern about these issues into concrete measures for their resolution.

My delegation notes with approval the guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament adopted by this body at its previous session, and pledges its support during the present session for further measures aimed at controlling this dangerous threat to international human security.

In conclusion, my delegation hopes that the current session will build upon the progress achieved at the previous substantive session so as to further advance the important work of the Disarmament Commission. This will enhance the unique role of the Commission as a multilateral deliberative body on disarmament.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): At the outset, I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to Ambassador Zarif on his unanimous election, and to pledge my delegation's full cooperation and support. We also congratulate all the other members of the Bureau, as well as the Chairmen of the Working Groups. I join previous speakers in expressing the gratitude of my delegation to Mr. Maged Abdel Aziz of Egypt for his contribution to the work of the previous session. My delegation would also like to thank Ms. Angélica Arce de Jeannet of Mexico for her efforts in preparing for this session.

Since the earliest stage of the establishment of the Disarmament Commission, the Mongolian delegation has attached great importance to this forum as an important international deliberative body in promoting the goals of arms control and disarmament at the regional and global levels. The fact that, as the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Dhanapala, said yesterday in this room, total world military expenditure increased by 2.1 per cent in real terms in 1999, amounting to approximately $780 billion, which represents 2.6 per cent of world gross national product, reinforces the need to make concrete progress in the field of disarmament. In this connection, my delegation believes that the Disarmament Commission is called upon to play, and should play, an increasing role.

This year, the Disarmament Commission has an important role to play, especially in the quest for agreements in two important areas. The first relates to ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament, and the second to practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms.

Nuclear disarmament with a view to the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons is at the heart of the whole range of disarmament and non-proliferation issues. We believe that the pressing issues are bringing the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) into force as soon as possible, strengthening the non-proliferation regime and the further implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), preserving the spirit of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, concluding a universal and verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty, and working out an effective verification regime for the Biological Weapons Convention.

My delegation joins other delegations in urging Member States and the parties concerned to spare no effort to achieve those objectives. In that context, Mongolia welcomed, as a promising sign for promoting nuclear disarmament, the recent ratification by the Russian Duma of the CTBT and the Treaty on Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (START II). This provides an important impetus to further nuclear arms reduction. Implementation of START II would not only lead to a considerable reduction in the deployed strategic warheads of the two major nuclear Powers, but also facilitate the next phase: START III negotiations.

Also on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation issues, I would like to stress the positive outcome of the recent 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT. Among its positive results, I would like to emphasize, in particular, the consensus reached by the States parties on further efforts towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons and curbing the spread of such weapons, as well as the unequivocal undertaking by all

nuclear-weapon States to make further efforts to reduce nuclear arsenals and non-strategic nuclear weapons.

Mongolia attaches great importance to the question of establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones as an important and valuable component of non-proliferation. It is this context that my country welcomed last year's adoption by the Disarmament Commission of the principles and guidelines on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, which would, in our view, further consolidate the existing zones and facilitate the establishment of new ones.

Mongolia is doing its part to contribute to strengthening the non-proliferation regime. In 1992, it declared its territory a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Today, Mongolia is working to strengthen its international security and its nuclear-weapon-free status in the light of General Assembly resolution 53/77 D, adopted in December 1998. A clearly defined and internationally recognized status for a territory almost the size of western Europe would be Mongolia's practical contribution to promoting the goal of strengthening the non-proliferation regime. In order to clearly define and institutionalize that status at a national level, last February our parliament adopted special legislation. The nuclear-weapon-free status, as well as the adoption of the national legislation, were welcomed and supported by the Secretary-General, and by the Non-Aligned Movement at its recent ministerial meeting in Cartagena. At present, my country is discussing, with the five permanent members of the Security Council, the form and content of security assurances that they could provide to Mongolia.

The second important current mandate of the Disarmament Commission is to identify and discuss practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. There are a number of issues of international concern. First of all, my delegation shares the legitimate concerns about the increase in the arms trade and the spread of conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons, especially in areas of armed conflict. It is estimated that 90 per cent of all conflict-related deaths and injuries are caused by small arms. The majority of victims are members of the civilian population; surprisingly, 80 per cent of them are women and children. Therefore, my delegation welcomes the proposal to hold an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects in 2001, preparations for which are already under way.

Last year we welcomed the entry into force of the anti-personnel landmines Convention as an important step in conventional disarmament. Strict implementation of the Convention would substantially reduce human suffering in many regions of the world. Mongolia attaches great importance to the reduction, and indeed the elimination, of certain categories and types of conventional weapons. It believes, however, that a reduction in conventional armaments should be carried out bearing in mind the defence and security needs of States.

It is also my delegation's belief that a further reduction in military budgets and the arms trade of States and an increase in transparency would promote the confidence building that is necessary for placing limitations on and reducing conventional arms. We therefore believe that the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms should be further strengthened and that it should be observed by all States.

Finally, allow me to express the hope that the 2000 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission will lead to realistic and important practical measures. I would like to take this opportunity to assure the Chairman once again of my delegation's full cooperation in his efforts to bring the work of the session to a successful conclusion.

Mr. Mra (Myanmar): First of all, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Ambassador Zarif on his election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at its 2000 session. I am confident that under his experienced and able leadership, our deliberations will be fruitful. My congratulations go also to the members of the Bureau and the Chairmen of the two Working Groups. I would like to assure him of my delegation's fullest cooperation in making the work of this session a success. I would also like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Dhanapala, for the important statement he made at the beginning of this session, yesterday.

This year, the Disarmament Commission is taking up two important substantive items. The first relates to ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament, and the second item, which is of no less importance, is on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms.

The session has also been shortened this year to two weeks of deliberations instead of the traditional three weeks. We should all endeavour to do our best to

achieve optimum results during the two-week period, and to come up with useful recommendations.

My delegation is of the view that, in seeking ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation plays a vital role. In this regard, Myanmar welcomes the successful outcome of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The statements made by the five nuclear-weapon States during the 2000 NPT Review Conference, reaffirming their willingness to pursue systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally, contributed positively to the outcome of the Review Conference in particular and to nuclear disarmament in general.

Ratification by the Russian Duma of START II was yet another welcome development. This historic initiative of the Russian Duma will pave the way for meaningful negotiations of START III between the United States of America and the Russian Federation.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is one of the cornerstones of nuclear disarmament. Universal adherence to and effective implementation of the CTBT can prevent the further proliferation of nuclear weapons. That is why the early entry into force of the CTBT and universal adherence to it have become crucial.

In searching for ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament, the early establishment of an ad hoc committee of the Conference on Disarmament to negotiate nuclear disarmament and the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on a fissile materials ban to commence negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty could contribute substantially towards nuclear disarmament. The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones also constitutes an effective measure for preventing the geographical proliferation of nuclear weapons and contributes towards nuclear disarmament. Myanmar is accordingly supportive of all efforts to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones. It may be pertinent to mention here that Myanmar is a State party to the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty.

Although the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV) has already been decided by the General Assembly, it has so far eluded consensus on its objectives and agenda. My delegation is of the view that the holding of such a session would allow us to review in a most comprehensive way all disarmament issues, including nuclear disarmament.

Since the end of the cold war, the proliferation of intra-State conflicts has riveted our attention on conventional weapons. Nowadays, numerous armed conflicts are being fought almost exclusively with such weapons. It is therefore most timely and appropriate that we discuss the question of confidence-building measures in conventional arms at this meeting. A number of initiatives have already been taken at the international, regional and national levels by Governments and non-governmental organizations to study the problems connected with conventional arms. These initiatives need encouragement and support to enable them to crystallize.

My delegation believes that, in handling the question of conventional arms, in view of its complexity, we should first focus our attention on some selected aspects of the problem, such as the illicit manufacturing, illicit trafficking and illicit use of small arms. My delegation is of the view that Member States have the legitimate right to manufacture, transfer and use small arms for their own security. In today's world, the illicit arms trade has become a matter of grave concern to the international community. It poses a serious threat to the peace and security of a State or region. The illicit arms trade, especially to insurgents operating within the territory of a sovereign State, should be prohibited at all costs. The convening of an international conference on the illicit arms trade in 2001 will provide us with the opportunity to discuss all aspects of the problem and to build a consensus on the issue.

In conclusion my delegation would like to reassure you, Sir, of our commitment to closely cooperating with you for a fruitful outcome of this session.

Mr. Arcaya (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to express our pleasure at your election, Sir, and at the election of the Deputy Foreign Minister of Iran, Mr. Zarif, to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at the 2000 substantive session, as well as at those of the other members of the Bureau. We are convinced that his experience and wise leadership are sufficient guarantees of our progress on the issues before us. Similarly, we congratulate the Chairmen of the two subsidiary bodies, the

representatives of Argentina and Ghana, and to reiterate our readiness to cooperate with them in achieving the objectives that we have set for ourselves.

We also wish to thank Mr. Zarif's predecessor, Mr. Abdelaziz of Egypt, and Mrs. Maria Angélica Arce de Jeannet of Mexico, whose efforts facilitated the adoption of agreements on matters of procedure and organization for this substantive session. We also thank Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala for the ideas and proposals he raised yesterday morning, which we consider to be most valuable.

The Disarmament Commission is working in circumstances in which trends towards dialogue and cooperation on the international scene have gradually gained strength. Nevertheless, it is a paradox to note that, in the midst of apparently favourable conditions, the disarmament process has not registered the sustained progress in recent years that we have all been yearning for. Despite this, we are convinced that the current international system offers a timely opportunity to States to join their efforts to promote effective measures in the area of disarmament and arms control.

Nuclear disarmament being an unshirkable objective for all mankind, we harbour the hope that the results achieved at the sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) will have a ripple effect in various forums and revitalize those bodies entrusted with considering these matters. In this respect, we feel that the unequivocal commitment made by the nuclear-weapon States to eliminate these systems could represent a step in that direction.

Although the Conference on Disarmament is still unable to define its programme of work, we trust that we will see an early start to the negotiation of a convention through which we will prohibit the production of fissile material and that this instrument will be ready in no more than five years.

With respect to the first substantive item on our agenda, "Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament", Venezuela feels that the international community can come up with various useful measures and proposals to smooth the way towards the reduction and ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons. In this context, we stress the initiatives promoted by the coalition of countries for a new nuclear agenda, the creation and consolidation of nuclear-weapon-free zones and the proclamation of the southern hemisphere and adjacent areas as a nuclear-weapon-free area. Furthermore, our delegation favours the proposal of the Secretary-General to convene an international conference to determine ways of eliminating nuclear dangers. Undoubtedly, the existence of a significant number of these weapons in a state of alert and the threat they pose to mankind are significant factors to be taken into account when we hold such a meeting.

Without underestimating the difficulties and hurdles that still lie ahead, we believe that at this session we can, in a flexible and constructive spirit, develop approaches for handling these matters. As noted, the Commission's characteristics as a decision-making body for formulating guidelines make this an appropriate forum for broad and objective discussion of these matters.

The delegation of Venezuela is particularly satisfied that Ms. Gabriela Martinic of Argentina has been elected to chair the Working Group on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional disarmament. This is one of the areas in which Latin America and the Caribbean have carried out major activities that have led to political and military initiatives to strengthen the climate of peace and stability in the region. The concept of confidence-building measures is thus not foreign to our countries. In that context, in recent years we have stepped up our efforts and, in the hemisphere, have promoted adoption of agreements in the field of conventional disarmament.

The adoption of the 1997 Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials and the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions are proof of the commitment of Latin America and the Caribbean to contribute to fostering a system of cooperative security.

Alongside the progress achieved at the regional level, it is encouraging to observe that measures have also been taken by the United Nations to enhance confidence in the area of conventional disarmament. In this regard, Venezuela continues its support for the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and for the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms.

Within that same context, my country attaches particular importance to the International Conference

on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects, to be held in 2001. That conference will offer States a political platform to combine their efforts to control and reduce the excessive accumulation of these arms, which, in the Secretary-General's words, represent a problem that affects human rights and development.

Finally, I wish to reiterate that, in our opinion, multilateral action is the most suitable way to promote solutions to problems of common interest which, because of their nature and scope, require a collective response based on dialogue and cooperation. In the field of disarmament, the United Nations, with its experience and credibility, represents the logical body to promote the adoption of disarmament and arms limitation measures aimed ultimately at strengthening peace and international security. For this reason, at a time of international change and transformation, the Disarmament Commission has an important role to play as a deliberative body in the formulation of recommendations and guidelines which can contribute to making solid progress in this area.

Mr. Dausá Céspedes (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, allow me to convey my warm congratulations to Ambassador Zarif on his well-deserved election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission for the present session. His talent, experience and personality are very well known and will undoubtedly contribute to the success of our work. My congratulations go also to the other members of the Bureau.

For the first time, the Disarmament Commission will hold its session in a time-frame of only two weeks. Cuba did not oppose such a brief session, on the understanding that it would be exceptional and would set no precedents for the future. We should strictly comply with the General Assembly decision that the Commission should hold three-week sessions, which itself is a brief period of time bearing in mind the responsibilities of this organ and the number of issues before us.

The selection of the two substantive items on the Commission's agenda, which was adopted yesterday, turned into a long and tortuous process that could be completed only just prior to the opening of the Commission's session. Looking to the future, we must keep working to find a more efficient mechanism for selecting Commission items in order to avoid the excessive exhaustion that characterizes the present system.

This session of the Commission will be innovative in various other aspects related to General Assembly decision 52/492. For the first time, the rolling consideration of two items, which will always include a nuclear disarmament item, will be implemented. Likewise, the calendar of meetings will be prepared with a view to not holding simultaneous meetings of subsidiary bodies. This will make it possible to give the smaller delegations broader possibilities for action , while forcing us to make more efficient use of the available time.

Despite the recommendations made by the General Assembly, we regret that it was not possible on this occasion to elect the Chairpersons of the Working Groups early enough for them to hold inter-sessional consultations. That would have been particularly useful to expedite the beginning of the present session, because of its limited duration. We hope that the Chairpersons of the Working Groups will be able to conduct timely consultations during future inter-sessional periods.

Three decades after the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the nuclear Powers recently decided — not without difficulties — to make a their commitment to the elimination of nuclear weapons. In short, they have recognized the existence of article VI of that Treaty. That situation would be almost laughable if it did not reveal how little has been achieved on nuclear disarmament.

It is paradoxical that some, fortunately few, are almost ecstatic about the outcome of the sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT when there are still no practical agreements guaranteeing the elimination of the 35,000 nuclear weapons which continue to jeopardize the very existence of humankind. There can be no place for complacency so long as eloquent words and phrases are spoken and no change is made to the New Strategic Concept of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which not only fails to decrease, but actually increases, the role of nuclear weapons in security policies.

There are still many other questions on certain countries' true intentions concerning disarmament. We see, for example, a lack of political will to begin negotiations on nuclear disarmament in the Conference

on Disarmament; the decision of the United States Senate not to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT); and the possibility that the United States might establish a national anti-missile defence system, in flagrant violation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.

We think it appropriate that, from the very outset, the Working Group on ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament should take into account the many proposals that have been presented in the last few years. Among them, just to mention a few, are the proposals of the group of 28 delegations, members of the Group of 21 to the Conference on Disarmament, the report of the Canberra Commission, and the relevant resolutions that the General Assembly adopts year after year.

Although it is said that the cold war is over, we all are aware of the unsafe and tense world climate and of the situation that some regions and countries are going through. That is why the formulation of guidelines on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms must stem from the basic principle that the initiatives applicable to one scenario may not work in others. Indeed, in some cases, the mechanical implementation in one region of experiences from another can harm the security environment. Respect for each region's characteristics and the consent of the States of the region are prerequisites for the implementation of any measure.

Genuine confidence-building must include many conditions, among them the following: the elimination of the military threats to which some States are subject; the elimination of categories of weapons that are a threat and can be used only offensively; the reformulation of military doctrines that are conceived to intimidate other States; addressing and eliminating non-military security threats, such as poverty and underdevelopment; an end to military exercises near the borders of other States, except by consent of the State in question; the provision of guarantees by the main military Powers with respect to the agreements adopted by a given region; and respect for State sovereignty and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

In contrast to the situation with respect to nuclear disarmament issues, the Disarmament Commission has in past years adopted a considerable number of documents on conventional weapons. To avoid duplication of work that has already been done, the scope of the work to be carried out by the Working Group on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms will have to be adequately defined.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm that Cuba will continue to cooperate actively and constructively in the search for solutions to the problems in the field of disarmament. With that in mind, the Cuban delegation is ready to contribute as best as it can to the success of the present session of the Disarmament Commission.

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia)*(spoke in Spanish)*: The prospects for the overall process of disarmament were rather discouraging at the start of the year. However, as several delegations have already mentioned, a number of events have given rise to a certain degree of optimism. Undoubtedly, the Russian Federation's ratification of the START II Treaty and of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) constituted significant progress in the process of nuclear disarmament.

Similarly, the successful outcome of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), during which Colombia had the honour of chairing Main Committee I, and particularly the commitment of nuclear States to the elimination of nuclear weapons, seemed to give a new boost to the disarmament process. Furthermore, some regional tension has abated, as we see in the rapprochement of the two Koreas, symbolized by the recent encounter of their two leaders; we hope this process will continue.

We also note the withdrawal of Israel from southern Lebanon, which took place in relative calm and in which both parties showed great responsibility. This is further positive news in an area that has been marked by conflict for more than 50 years.

Positive events such as these might seem to have left the Commission with nothing to talk about. There is a feeling among certain delegations that the effort made during the NPT Review Conference exhausted the possibilities of nuclear disarmament deliberations, as we could see during the consultations to organize the Disarmament Commission's substantive session.

Nevertheless, my delegation regrets that the Commission was unable to reach an agreement on an analysis of missile proliferation. Yet the main

international security concerns at the present time are related to the development of missile technology, and to its proliferation among various countries and in zones of great tension. We could see this at the last session of the First Committee of the General Assembly, where several new draft resolutions on this matter were submitted. My delegation feels that, even though this is a controversial topic, it should not be taboo, and that this Commission, as a deliberative rather than a negotiating body, ought to be the forum for airing the concerns of all parties in this area.

The summit of heads of State or Government of the Permanent Mechanism for Consultation and Concerted Political Action, the Rio Group, which was held in Cartagena from 14 to 16 June, stated that nuclear disarmament was the responsibility of all States, primarily those that possess nuclear weapons, and indicated its satisfaction with the outcome of the Review Conference. My delegation feels that we should take advantage of the positive results of that Conference to boost the nuclear disarmament process. We also hope that this would make it possible to achieve prompt consensus in the Conference on Disarmament on a programme of work. This new Disarmament Commission cycle should take into account the results of the NPT Review Conference in considering ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament.

Colombia considers that complete elimination of nuclear weapons should continue to be the objective, and that we should try to reach that objective in the near future. The deliberations of the Disarmament Commission on this new topic should bolster the process of nuclear disarmament, and should seek the building of consensus in this regard.

With respect to the item on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms, the Commission adopted a set of guidelines almost 15 years ago. The world has changed since then, and the international security situation is not the same, although we cannot say that it has improved. A review of current guidelines could be timely, but it should not be the only objective of the Working Group. Colombia understands security as a collective, not an isolated individual concept. In this respect, the promotion of confidence-building in the field of conventional arms is fundamental.

My delegation would like finally to reiterate the importance that we attach to the Disarmament Commission as a universal forum for the discussion of disarmament issues. The Commission has an important role to play in building consensus on disarmament matters and, by extension, international security.

I would like to assure the Chairman that he can count on my delegation's cooperation and participation so that our work can progress smoothly.

Mr. Shamshad (Pakistan): First of all, allow me to congratulate Mr. Javad Zarif on his election as the Chairman of this year's substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. Knowing him personally, as I do, I am delighted at the high personal esteem in which he is held at the United Nations. I also wish to congratulate the other members of the Bureau on having been elected to steer the work of the Commission this year.

This session of the Disarmament Commission is taking place against the backdrop of an international situation characterized by tumult and flux. The cold war ended a decade ago, and the period since then — for want of a better phrase — has been termed the post-cold-war period. However, as the events of last year demonstrated, the world is moving into a different and even more complex situation that we might call the post-post-cold-war period. The grand expectations — for a peace dividend, the resolution of all disputes, an end to the pursuit of hegemonistic policies, tangible movement towards nuclear disarmament and cooperative multipolarity — have not come true. The window of opportunity for genuine progress towards nuclear disarmament afforded by the end of the cold war seems to be closing, and we seem to be living with thousands of nuclear weapons in an uncertain world.

We feel that the agenda for this year's session is rooted in the current realities and provides the potential for substantive and serious deliberations. Having spent so much time and energy in finalizing the agenda items, we hope that all of us can work hard and show the necessary flexibility to successfully negotiate agreed guidelines.

During the past decade, a few successes notwithstanding, the progress towards nuclear disarmament has been rather slow and negligible. In fact, there are a host of negative developments that lend an air of pessimism to the nuclear disarmament scene. These include new doctrines and concepts

placing increasing emphasis on nuclear weapons; the risk of the possible use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States; moves for the amendment or abrogation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, which could trigger a new build-up of nuclear weapons; the proposed deployment of future missile defences in regions of heightened tensions, including in South Asia; and nuclear testing in laboratory conditions to improve and refine nuclear weapons, which is contrary to the objectives and spirit of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). This list could go on and, therefore, concerns about the gradual erosion of the global disarmament framework are not misplaced.

The nuclearization of South Asia is now a reality. We regret that South Asia went nuclear in spite of our serious and sincere efforts to prevent this. India's nuclear tests and its subsequent hostility and bellicosity left Pakistan with no choice but to conduct its own nuclear tests to restore the strategic balance in the region and to avert the risk of a disastrous conflict in the face of nuclear blackmail. Any objective discussion on the problem of nuclear weapons in South Asia has to factor in the reactive nature of Pakistan's policy and the real issues of peace and security in our region.

In this regard, we note with regret that the Final Document of this year's Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), while offering comments on South Asia, failed to make the crucial distinction between the ambitions of India and the compulsions of Pakistan. It would have been only appropriate had the Review Conference devoted at least a part of its deliberations to identifying the causes of non-realization of the NPT goals and objectives and the events that struck a blow to non-proliferation norms in South Asia.

As part of its traditional policy of restraint and responsibility, Pakistan two years ago proposed to India a comprehensive strategic restraint regime covering mutual nuclear and conventional arms restraint, as well as peaceful resolution of differences and disputes. India, in addition to rejecting our proposal on a strategic restraint regime, is also reneging on confidence-building measures earlier agreed between the two countries. India test-fired a short-range surface-to-surface Prithvi missile on 16 June, and did not provide any prior notification of this test to Pakistan — which is contrary to the terms of the bilateral understanding between the two countries. The announcement by India of a draft nuclear doctrine envisaging the operational deployment of a triad of nuclear forces, that is, a huge arsenal of land-, air- and sea-based nuclear weapons, is also a source of grave concern to the States of the region.

Pakistan attaches great importance to the promotion of conventional arms control at the global and the regional levels. We agree that although nuclear weapons pose the threat of global annihilation, it is conventional weapons that continue to be used in scores of conflicts that afflict various parts of the world. The conventional arms race also consumes the vast majority of the resources expended by rich and poor nations alike. After an encouraging decline in the outlays on conventional weapons in the immediate aftermath of the cold war, there is now the danger of a revived emphasis on the build-up of conventional armaments and armed forces, for several reasons. These include the unfortunate proliferation of conflicts and wars in various parts of the world; the growing divergences in the strategic priorities and perceptions of some of the major Powers; the ambition for regional hegemony by the so-called new aspirants to great-Power status — which is so clear in South Asia, where one country, in spite of its overwhelming superiority in conventional arms, has hiked its defence budget by 28 per cent this year alone; technological progress, which has made the acquisition of new weapons and modes of warfare feasible and irresistible for the military-industrial complexes of at least some powerful States; and, finally, the unrestricted sale and supply of sophisticated weapons by certain major arms-producing countries.

Conventional arms control efforts can be made particularly meaningful if efforts are made against the creation of serious arms imbalances in sensitive regions of the world. These imbalances can occur if some regional States resort to large-scale acquisition or production of armaments while others in the region are denied the ability to match such acquisitions. Such imbalances will only heighten the insecurity of smaller States. They could also compel the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Conventional arms control covers the whole spectrum of different types of arms. While there is growing international focus on small arms, in our discussions we need to pay more attention to highly advanced, lethal conventional armaments in the hands

of a few powerful States, as well as to the build-up of naval arms. It may be pertinent to mention that some of the next generation of conventional armaments may achieve the destructive potential of a small nuclear bomb.

In conclusion, my delegation once again assures the Chairman and the Bureau of its fullest cooperation in making our deliberations successful.

Mr. Apunte (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me, on behalf of my delegation, to congratulate Ambassador Zarif on his election to preside over our work, as well as the other members of the Bureau. We would also like to extend our congratulations to the representatives of Argentina and of Ghana on their election to chair the two Working Groups.

The most recent Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which was held in April and May, highlighted the importance placed by the international community on nuclear disarmament, and laid the basis for achieving a formal commitment by the nuclear-weapon States to eliminate those weapons in accordance with article VI of the NPT. The establishment within the Conference on Disarmament of an ad hoc committee with the mandate to negotiate on nuclear disarmament, is an important step in this respect, and we hope that the Committee will be able to help overcome the inertia that has characterized the Conference in recent years.

A positive outcome to the work of this Commission would undoubtedly ensure that the optimism with which the NPT Review Conference closed did not fade away, but, on the contrary, provided an impetus for us to draw up appropriate principles on the two substantive items before us.

In this respect, the Final Document agreed upon at the NPT Review Conference identifies some of the elements aspects that should be taken into account in designing a strategy for the reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons. However, this should not prevent us from further examining the important points of view that were presented by various delegations, in particular those of the countries members of the New Agenda Coalition, which my delegation supports.

We trust that the nuclear-weapon States will make even greater efforts for the progressive elimination of their nuclear arsenals, deactivate those that are in a state of alert and commit themselves to negotiating a treaty on the complete prohibition on fissile material for nuclear weapons, which, among other commitments, are included in the Final Document of the Review Conference.

I should like to refer to the part of the Final Document of the Review Conference dealing with nuclear-weapon-free zones, which endorses the agreement that we reached in the Commission last year, to which my delegation attaches a great deal of importance. Nuclear disarmament should be complemented by measures and initiatives on conventional disarmament; the second substantive item on our agenda thus assumes particular importance. Ecuador will support any measure that would build confidence in the area of conventional arms. In the past, we supported the initiative of former President Oscar Arias to declare a moratorium on the purchase of high-technology weapons. We are a party to the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions, and we believe that we still have an opportunity to improve procedures and build confidence through the improvement of conventional arms registers, among other mechanisms.

In this area, we can make efforts at the regional, subregional and bilateral levels. Transparency in weapons acquisitions, information exchanges, disarmament and arms limitation agreements, the search for regional balance, participation in joint verification or monitoring activities, streamlined and transparent bilateral communication channels between military and civil forces, and border security commitments, among many other measures, are all valuable tools for improving trust among States.

Finally, my delegation views with particular interest the Secretary-General's proposal, contained in his report on the Millennium Assembly (A/54/2000), to convene an international conference to help identify ways to eliminate nuclear dangers.

The Chairman can rest assured of my delegation's cooperation during this session.

Mr. Osei (Ghana): My delegation shares the warm sentiments conveyed by previous speakers to the Chairman, on his election to steer the deliberations of the substantive session of the Disarmament Commission, and to the other members of the Bureau. He can rest assured of our full support and cooperation in his work to bring our session to a fruitful conclusion.

I should like to take this opportunity to comment the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Dhanapala, for his lucid, detailed and constructive statement, which, in my delegation's view, throws considerable light on our work over the next two weeks. Indeed, in our drive to achieve common security, we need to learn from history. As the Disarmament Commission is a deliberating body only, our relevance lies in the very *raison d'être* of our mandate: to deliberate on the work of the various bodies of the United Nations disarmament machinery and to make recommendations on ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament, as well as to identify practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. It behoves us to work to achieve not merely a paper consensus, as the Under-Secretary-General put it, but to ensure that our efforts fully augment or complement the process of achieving international peace and security.

The timing of our session, coming as it does on the heels of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), is propitious, for it is now generally acknowledged that the results of the NPT Review Conference will be significant for maintaining and strengthening nuclear non-proliferation, which is necessary, and for promoting nuclear disarmament in future. These results were made possible because States demonstrated the necessary political will, flexibility and commitment to the process.

This body, the Disarmament Commission, can also do no less than take advantage of the prevailing disarmament mood and work diligently to sustain the momentum achieved at the Review Conference. This is especially true as we are holding our first Disarmament Commission session of the new millennium at a time when the international community is seeking new avenues for overcoming threats to overall peace and security. Indeed, the realm of disarmament, which is critical to that search by the international community, lies at the heart of the efforts of the United Nations to maintain and strengthen international peace and security.

Ghana has a long history of involvement in nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. Indeed, in 1963, our first President, the late Mr. Kwame Nkrumah, led the first-ever protest march in Africa, across the Sahara, against nuclear tests in that area. Since then we have participated in various disarmament forums. We have demonstrated our commitment to the disarmament process by signing and ratifying most of the multilateral conventions on disarmament, notably the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. As a signatory of the more recent Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction — the Ottawa Convention — we have just completed the process of ratification. Our instrument of ratification, dated 23 February, will shortly be deposited with the Depositary.

It is against that background that we welcome the Secretary-General's proposal on the convening of an international conference on disarmament. That, in our view, would go a long way towards building confidence in the process that is under way, and would help galvanize the necessary commitment and political will for the work ahead.

As a Member State from a subregion that has become very prone to conflict, Ghana views with concern the illicit trade in and the proliferation of small arms. The Secretary-General has noted in his report on the Millennium Assembly that

> "The death toll from small arms dwarfs that of all other weapons systems — and in most years greatly exceeds the toll of the atomic bombs that devastated Hiroshima and Nagasaki. ... Yet there is still no global non-proliferation regime to limit their spread, as there is for chemical, biological and nuclear weapons". (*A/54/2000, para. 238*)

That is a perception that my delegation shares. We also agree with the Secretary-General that small arms proliferation is not merely a security issue; it is also an issue of human rights and of development, since, *inter alia*, it exacerbates conflicts.

In that connection, we have strongly supported and commended the Economic Community of West African States moratorium on importing, exporting and manufacturing light weapons in West Africa. Last year, building on that subregional initiative, Ghana hosted a regional workshop on small arms, which set out the modalities for the establishment of an arms register to control the flow of arms into the region. The United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, to be held in 2001, will thus be a step in the right direction, and we

look forward to working with other Member States during the preparatory process for that conference.

Let me reiterate a point I made earlier in this statement, which I believe has also been made by other delegations. This session is the first of the new millennium, the first after the positive outcome of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and the first of three sessions of the Disarmament Commission in the present agenda cycle. Our prayer is that we will all contribute to laying a foundation that will make the work of the Disarmament Commission relevant to the process of disarmament in the twenty-first century.

Mr. Widodo (Indonesia): At the outset, let me express my delegation's congratulations to Mr. Javad Zarif on his unanimous election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission. We are aware of his dedication to the cause of disarmament, and thus remain confident that under his able guidance our deliberations will be brought to a successful conclusion. Our congratulations go also to the other members of the Bureau on their election.

As this is the first session of the Disarmament Commission in the new millennium, my delegation deems it important that we assess our past endeavours, learn from those experiences and renew our commitment to arms limitation and disarmament. The continuing and heightened nuclear arms race, nuclear proliferation and the accumulation of conventional weapons have created serious challenges. The post-cold-war era, however, offers a new climate for concerted action and new opportunities. The global community, which has undergone profound change and transition, has a solemn obligation at this particularly critical juncture to embark upon a realistic course of action that will build on past achievements.

It is against that backdrop that this year's session of the Disarmament Commission has been convened. The very fact that the recently concluded 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was able to end with a consensus agreement fully reflects that sense of realism. Nuclear and related issues were dealt with in a comprehensive manner. Significantly, the Conference pointed the way towards the creation of a nuclear-free world through the identification of appropriate modalities leading to an end to the division of the world into nuclear haves and nuclear have-nots.

Those positive developments have also reaffirmed the importance of nuclear disarmament, as demonstrated by the submission of various proposals by groups of States such as the non-aligned countries and by authoritative forums such as the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons and the Tokyo Forum for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament. The main focus of those proposals is on: the NPT; nuclear-weapon-free zones; safeguard of fissile materials; non-first-use of nuclear weapons; reinforcement of bilateral agreements between the Russian Federation and the United States; drastic reductions of nuclear arsenals; the elimination of tactical weapons; the call for demilitarization; and an effective way of dealing with the myriad of nuclear issues.

Taken together, those proposals call for an unequivocal commitment to a nuclear-weapon-free world, which would enhance international security; for preparing the ground for more drastic cuts in nuclear armaments; and for bolstering efforts to eliminate those weapons. In Indonesia's view, they contain realistic and achievable proposals to ensure that the international community need not endure the frightening prospect of the indefinite possession of nuclear armaments. Equally important, they call for multilaterally negotiated instruments to make nuclear weapons reductions irreversible and to move forward to their internationally verifiable abolition.

It is gratifying to note that the number of nuclear weapons has continued to drop in the post-cold-war era. Some nuclear-weapon States have stated their intention not to produce fissile materials for weapons purposes and to place their military stockpiles under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. Cooperation among those States has been intensified to reduce the nuclear threat. The entire southern hemisphere is now a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

Although these are commendable achievements, there have been no negotiations for the past several years on strategic or tactical nuclear weapons. Further compounding the situation is the reaffirmation of certain strategic doctrines, and the threat of use of nuclear weapons even against non-nuclear States, as well as the lack of transparency with regard to the number of nuclear weapons and to quantities of nuclear material.

My delegation remains hopeful that at this session the Disarmament Commission will focus attention on the formulation of ways and means to achieve deep, irreversible reductions in nuclear stockpiles, the consolidation of existing nuclear-weapon-free zones, and transparency on nuclear and other related issues.

Nuclear weapons pose unacceptable dangers. Indefinitely retaining them involves the risk of further proliferation and, sooner or later of use, either by design or by accident. In this regard, the Secretary-General's proposal to convene an international conference to explore ways and means of reducing such dangers is worthy of our serious consideration.

As far as the second substantive item on our agenda is concerned, it is clear that because of the nuclear threat to human civilization, nuclear disarmament must continue to be accorded the highest priority. Yet we cannot fail to note that since the end of the Second World War, an estimated 2 million people have lost their lives in some 150 armed conflicts fought with conventional weapons; current trends do not give any reason to believe that there will be a decrease in the incidence or the severity of such conflicts. More than four fifths of the world's total expenditure for military purposes is spent on conventional arms and armed forces. Therefore, the situation concerning conventional armaments is a source of increasing concern.

The resources devoted to huge arsenals — nuclear and conventional — take up the funds that could be devoted to economic development and social progress, which is of great importance to the people of developed and developing countries alike. In this light, as efforts are made to achieve nuclear disarmament, the international community should focus attention on effective measures to reduce conventional armaments in order to divert the resources now spent on war to socio-economic advancement.

Although confidence-building measures — whether they be military, political, economic, commercial, cultural or humanitarian — are no substitute for concrete disarmament measures, they can play an important role in progress towards disarmament. They can contribute to creating a climate conducive to trust and confidence, whether they are taken unilaterally, bilaterally or multilaterally. By fostering an atmosphere of improved international relations, they can facilitate the adoption of measures to limit conventional arms and armed forces.

An important category of confidence-building measures relates to the military aspects of security, which, it must be emphasized, differ between regions and even within regions. These include the exchange of information, communication, notification and mutual observation of military activities, and measures to facilitate verification procedures. Related measures call for restraint in military activities to alleviate fear and to remove sources of tension and the possibility of surprise attack.

Negotiations on arms limitation and reduction offer unprecedented opportunities for the establishment of confidence-building measures. Conversely, multilateral arms-control discussions should include not only confidence-building measures, but also agreements to moderate the flow of armaments into a region. Taken together, that would create an environment conducive to the reduction of weapons through negotiations.

The confidence-building process in South-East Asia is growing and becoming more specific, and it can be said to be developing a concrete character, as epitomized by the establishment of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum (ARF) in 1994. Its prime objective is to create and maintain confidence among the participating countries. As such, it has played a positive role in enhancing mutual understanding and trust, promoting greater transparency and strengthening the commitment among participants to maintain the climate of peace and stability in the region. The ARF may turn out to be the ultimate confidence-building measure in that part of the world.

Indonesia views the availability of relevant information as an essential prerequisite for establishing mutual confidence and thereby facilitating the process of disarmament. While some of the notable achievements in confidence-building measures have been in the context of Europe, these have assumed increasing importance for the Asia-Pacific region, where endemic conflicts, as well as persistent mistrust and miscommunication, have frustrated the initiation of arms-reduction talks for so long.

In this regard, proposals for confidence-building measures on land and sea, such as a reduction in the frequency and size of military exercises and a

multilateral instrument to govern incidents at sea, merit careful attention. Equally important would be the elimination of certain types of weapons, restraint in armament acquisitions, and limitation of deployment by external Powers in strategically important areas and waters.

While realizing that for the time being there may be scant opportunity for such formal arms-reduction negotiations and agreements in the Asia-Pacific region, there is scope for the initiation and implementation of selective confidence-building measures. Some concrete measures in this respect could be considered, such as the establishment of a consultative mechanism for the initiation and implementation of arms-control and disarmament agreements; regular exchanges of data among the major Powers and regional countries on their respective military budgets, doctrines and future force protection; the publication and exchange of information on military activities and other matters related to mutual security; the gradual reduction of military budgets on a mutually agreed basis; measures to strengthen the security of non-nuclear-weapon States; disengagement and separation of forces; constraints concerning military options; and the fostering of mutual confidence through joint regional endeavours in a spirit of common responsibility and amity.

These measures should be bolstered by transparency in international transfers of conventional arms, which is an important component of confidence-building measures, arms limitation and disarmament. This would encourage restraint arms export and import policies. The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms was established as a voluntary repository of data on major international conventional arms transfers. Since its inception in 1992, what is recorded in the Register from the Asia-Pacific region has been constant. Parallel to this effort, our attention should be focused on enhancing the role of the United Nations as the repository of objective data through the collection, compilation and dissemination of information on military matters.

The series of agreements on border-related confidence-building measures reached in the recent past between various States and groups of States in the Asia-Pacific region is particularly noteworthy. These accords are between well-armed States that have fought with each other in the not-too-distant past over disputed boundaries. Such agreements merit our commendation; if implemented, they will facilitate even more cooperative arrangements.

It is also pertinent to note that region's flashpoints in the maritime domain; these raise the question of whether sustained efforts should be exerted regarding maritime confidence-building measures and conflict settlement. Singapore and Malaysia deserve credit for taking their dispute over an island to the International Court of Justice. Indonesia and Malaysia have done likewise. Indonesian-sponsored workshops have made steady progress on the South China Sea dispute, while an indicator of success in this regard would be whether the States involved opt for cooperative settlements and resource-sharing agreements.

An Asia-Pacific regional consensus accommodating the vital interests of all States is essential to address questions of conventional armaments. ASEAN and the South Pacific Forum have the potential to develop such a consensus.

Further exploration of existing and new concepts has become imperative. Confidence-building measures have proven their utility. Whether the new millennium sees further progress or regrettable backsliding, the new Government of Indonesia and its new leaders are, nonetheless, determined to place greater emphasis on the proper implementation of confidence-building measures, as well as on dialogue and negotiations to peacefully resolve conflicts between nations. That was the central theme of a speech delivered by President Wahid during a panel discussion on "Dialogue among Civilizations: Towards a Culture of Peace" held at United Nations Headquarters on 13 June of this year. Indonesia will continue its efforts, in concert with others, to build upon existing confidence-building measures in a pragmatic way and to pave the way for more steps in that direction for the mutual benefit of all countries in our region.

Mr. Thapa (Nepal): Let me affirm my delegation's sincere congratulations to Ambassador Zarif on his assumption of the chairmanship of the 2000 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. Confident of his ability to successfully guide the deliberations of the Commission, I would like to assure him of my delegation's full cooperation in his conduct of our deliberations.

As usual, my delegation is of the opinion that the Disarmament Commission, as a deliberative body on

disarmament matters, has an important role to play in making in-depth analyses of the issues and developing norms and guidelines for international arms control. My delegation wishes to make the following observations. The 2000 session of the Disarmament Commission is the first to take place in the new millennium and is supposed to inspire positive changes in a world that is still characterized by rising challenges and a lack of tranquility. Consensus in the Disarmament Commission on certain issues can have an encouraging impact on disarmament negotiations elsewhere, especially in the Conference on Disarmament, which has been deadlocked for three years on the question of its programme of work. The successful conclusion of the sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), held in April and May of this year, has provided further impetus to advance the complex process of disarmament. To the satisfaction of all, the Review Conference produced a Final Document with a paragraph containing an unequivocal commitment from the nuclear-weapon States to eliminate their nuclear arsenals. The historic 1996 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice undoubtedly crafted a course of action by telling us to pursue the objective of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. Following that Opinion, it has become obvious that ridding the world of nuclear weapons is an obligation devolving on us from the provisions of the NPT.

In the field of disarmament, we need to be guided by our desire for the common good of mankind. The disarmament process can be advanced only by ensuring that parochial interests do not prevail over collective interests. Threats to international security can be better dealt with through our common endeavours.

Notwithstanding the fact that my delegation's preference would have been for stronger language in the agenda item relating to nuclear disarmament, the Disarmament Commission's agreement to discuss ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament clearly underscores the priority accorded to the issue of nuclear disarmament since the first session of the General Assembly. Despite the serious setbacks that global non-proliferation regimes have suffered, including the nuclear tests in South Asia in May 1998, the international community can take some solace from the fact that the moratorium on nuclear testing has been maintained. We hope to build on the conducive environment of nuclear restraint to make further progress in the field of disarmament.

Complexities have been added to the issue of conventional disarmament with the financing of the illegal arms trade by drugs and other questionable sources of funds. Paradoxically, the development of technology has also enhanced the lethality of the small arms that are most frequently used in today's wars. More concerted efforts are needed to stem the proliferation of such arms. It is heartening to note that the preparatory process has already begun for the convening of the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects.

Confidence-building measures have a positive role to play in furthering the process of disarmament. In this regard, the activities performed by United Nations regional centres to promote regional disarmament in different parts of the world are worth mentioning here. Nepal, as host to the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, feels satisfied at the fact that the Centre has been able to make a useful contribution towards promoting peace and disarmament. My delegation sincerely hopes that the operations of the Centre in Kathmandu will receive attention and support from the international community, and that financial support for the Centre's substantive activities will continue to increase.

The road ahead of the Disarmament Commission is not smooth, in view of the diverse stakes involved, but, given the strong political will demonstrated during the sixth NPT Review Conference, there is no reason why consensus cannot be built for nuclear and conventional disarmament, however challenging that may be.

Mr. Itzhaki (Israel): My delegation had planned to deliver a very long statement addressing all the issues before the Commission, but having listened to some of the statements made earlier we have decided to make the following brief statement.

I wish to congratulate the Chairman and the other members of the Bureau on their assumption of their posts. As they preside over these important deliberations, we shall extend our full cooperation throughout. This is the first such session of the new millennium, and it comes with the promise of a new era of peace and coexistence.

Israel has actively participated in the deliberations of the Disarmament Commission out of its belief in the value of addressing the various arms-control and disarmament issues in a professional and constructive manner. It is therefore most unfortunate that the representative of Egypt chose to deliver remarks that injected political considerations into this forum. For that reason, Israel chooses not to engage in a confrontational exchange, and therefore not to respond to the remarks of the representative of Egypt. Instead, we hope that a positive and constructive tone can be restored and maintained throughout the remainder of these deliberations.

The Acting Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): We have thus concluded our two days of general exchange of views. I would like to remind delegations that the Working Groups will begin to meet tomorrow. I wish every success to delegations, as well as to the two persons who will preside over the work of the groups.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.

United Nations A/CN.10/PV.239

General Assembly Official Records

Disarmament Commission
239th meeting
Friday, 7 July 2000, 3 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Zarif ..... (Islamic Republic of Iran)

The meeting was called to order at 3.55 p.m.

Reports by Chairmen of Working Groups

The Chairman: We are approaching the final stage of the 2000 substantive session, and will proceed to the adoption of the reports of the subsidiary bodies on the various agenda items, and to the consideration and adoption of the draft report of the Commission, as contained in documents A/CN.10/2000/CRP.2, CRP.3 and CRP.4. Those documents have been circulated in all languages, except for A/CN.10/2000/CRP.3 of 5 July, which is available in English only. We shall then hear concluding statements from delegations.

Before turning to those documents, may I inform the members of the Commission that in the course of the work of the Working Groups, the Group of Western European and other States and the Group of Eastern European States nominated Vice-Chairmen for the two Groups: the representative of Luxembourg and the representative of Armenia. They have been cooperating with us in the Bureau, and I am thankful to them.

I now have the pleasure of giving the floor to the Chairman of Working Group I, on agenda item 4, "Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament", Mr. Yaw Odei Osei of Ghana, to introduce the report of the Working Group, which is contained in document A/CN.10/2000/CRP.3.

Mr. Osei (Ghana), Chairman of Working Group I: I would like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for giving me the floor and the opportunity to introduce the report of Working Group I, which considered agenda item 4, entitled "Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament". Through you, Mr. Chairman, I would first like to thank the other members of the Commission for the confidence they placed in me by appointing me. I would also like to thank them for the support and cooperation they showed in the five meetings we held as we charted what, at the beginning, seemed like uncertain waters.

As reflected in the report of the Working Group, contained in document A/CN.10/2000/CRP.3, we did indeed hold five meetings between 28 June and 6 July. And I also had the distinct pleasure of conducting a number of informal consultations. After two meetings, I saw the need for a paper to guide the discussions. As a result of further consultations and hints from members of the Working Group, I presented a working paper. That paper, document A/CN.10/2000/WG.I/WP.1 of 5 July 2000, embodied a structure and elements that we felt could contribute to our consideration of ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament.

At our final meeting, on Thursday, 6 July, we had the opportunity to consider our draft report. The reason the draft report of the Working Group is available in English only is that, as a courtesy to the Group, it was important that the amendments introduced by respective members in English only should be reflected as they were introduced. I am glad to observe that the report has been endorsed as a reflection of what really took place, apart from minor changes and typographical errors and omissions.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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This then is our report. I would also like to say that the Chairman's working paper was issued entirely on my sole responsibility and does not represent a negotiated position or any consensus whatever. I underscore these points so that delegations can leave this room relaxed and without any sense of having committed themselves to anything unexpected. This was the Chairman's initiative, and I felt it would be my humble contribution to help us sustain the momentum that we have gained on disarmament and to provide a basis for further work in our meetings next year and thereafter.

Having said this, let me also take this opportunity to thank all those, other than members of delegations, who have worked tirelessly in the background, particularly the Secretariat staff, the interpreters and the other conference staff — notably the documents officers and the conference officers, who were quite prompt and smart in the distribution of all relevant materials as, and when, available.

I would simply like to end by saying that the lot of the Chairman is at times a very uncomfortable one. Chairpersons undergo the same stress as the proverbial Ghanaian monkey whose sweating as it runs away from danger often goes unnoticed because its abundant hair acts as camouflage. But the joy of it all is that, at the end of the day, those who make your life difficult are the first to come and say that you have done a good job. I am grateful for the honour of having chaired the Working Group.

The Chairman: I thank the Chairman of Working Group I for his report, and for his efforts in guiding the work of the Working Group on nuclear disarmament. We are all thankful to him for the good work he has done.

If there are no comments, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the report of Working Group I, as contained in document A/CN.10/2000/CRP.3.

The report was adopted.

The Chairman: We now turn to the report of Working Group II on agenda item 5, entitled "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons", as contained in document A/CN.10/2000/CRP.4.

I call on the Chairperson of Working Group II, Mrs. Gabriela Martinic of Argentina.

Mrs. Martinic (Argentina), Chairperson of Working Group II (spoke in Spanish): I have the honour to introduce the report of Working Group II, on agenda item 5, entitled "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons", contained in document A/CN.10/2000/CRP.4.

The Working Group held six meetings, during which we had an interesting and illuminating exchange of views.

First of all, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your advice. I would also like to thank representatives for their constant support, as well as their friendship and spirit of cooperation. I thank Mr. Kamal and Mr. Chang for their contributions, as well as Mr. Alasaniya and Mrs. Shestakova. I would also like to thank the interpreters and the conference officers, who facilitated our work.

At the beginning of the work of Working Group II, I said that I was convinced that gratitude is better expressed in deeds than in words. I committed myself to work with the Group with determination and enthusiasm. I believe that I certainly did work with determination and with enthusiasm. I also said in my statement, Mr. Chairman, that I was counting on your cooperation. And today, I am also counting on your confidence. When we dived into the pool, the water seemed very chilly indeed, but today I think we are ready to swim. Let us all continue our work.

The Chairman: I thank the Chairperson of Working Group II for her excellent leadership of the group, her integrity and her patience, as well as for her introduction of the group's excellent report to the Commission.

As no delegation wishes to comment on the report of the Working Group on agenda item 5, contained in document A/CN.10/2000/CRP.4, may I take it that the Commission wishes to adopt that report?

The report was adopted.

The Chairman: Now that the reports of the two Working Groups have been adopted, let me once again, on behalf of the members of the Commission, express appreciation to the Chairpersons of the two Working Groups for their excellent work in guiding the discussions on two important issues. This is the first year of our consideration of those items, and I believe that over the next two years we will make even greater use of the contributions that were made by numerous

delegations, as well as by the Chairpersons, to these discussions.

Let us now begin our consideration of the draft report of the Disarmament Commission, contained in document A/CN.10/2000/CRP.2.

I have the pleasure of giving the floor to the Rapporteur of the Commission, Mr. Samuel Amehou of Benin, to introduce the draft report of the Commission.

Mr. Amehou (Benin), Rapporteur of the Disarmament Commission: It is my honour and my distinct pleasure to introduce to the Disarmament Commission the draft report of the Commission, as contained in document A/CN.10/2000/CRP.2. The draft report consists of four chapters: "Introduction", "Organization and work of the 2000 substantive session", "Documentation" and "Conclusions and recommendations".

Turning to the text of the draft report, let me draw the attention of delegations to paragraph 8. In the process of putting together the final text, a sentence was inadvertently dropped. That paragraph should read as follows:

> "At its first meeting, on 26 June, the Commission heard the statements of Mr. Javad Zarif, Chairman of the Commission, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and of the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala."

A number of delegations have made oral amendments to the draft report, as follows.

In paragraph 7, the text "and associated countries" should be inserted following "the European Union".

In paragraph 17, the text "Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Turkey" should be inserted following "the European Union".

In paragraph 24, the text "submitted by Portugal and France on behalf of" should be inserted before "the European Union and associated countries".

The text of paragraph 27 should read as follows:

> "At the same meeting, the Commission adopted, as a whole, its report to be presented to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session".

As is customary, the final report is a factual description of the Commission's work and proceedings during the session. The substantive part consists of the reports of the two Working Groups that have just been adopted by the Commission and that form part of the present draft report. That part is a reflection of compromises and agreements reached by delegations through delicate negotiations carried out in a spirit of positive cooperation. It also represents the best possible achievement under the time pressures, which were unusually severe this year. Since this was the first year that the Working Groups did not hold parallel meetings, I was privileged to be able to watch closely both Chairpersons and delegations skilfully and patiently crafting a consensus on two of the most complex issues on the modern disarmament agenda. The reports of the two Working Groups, together with other documents, although not perfect or fully satisfactory to everybody, will serve as a good basis for further discussion.

On agenda item 4, "Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament", I can say that it is a welcome occurrence that the first dialogue on this complex issue, right after the successful conclusion of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) Review Conference, took place within the framework of the Disarmament Commission. The Commission's deliberative mandate allows practical and action-oriented considerations as well as broad philosophical and conceptual approaches to the issue, without its being under negotiating pressure.

On agenda item 5, "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons", a valiant effort to reach a consensus was undertaken by the Chairperson and Member States. Despite remaining differences, most of which are rooted in national security concerns, it was still possible to find a compromise that kept the momentum alive and transmitted to the official session of the Disarmament Commission the ideas and proposals put forward during the session intact, almost in their entirety. The fact that nothing was lost and that all of the positive achievements of this session will become part of the official deliberations is a commendable achievement in itself.

I wish to take this opportunity to say that it has been a great honour to serve as Rapporteur of this session, and in particular to work under the able leadership of our Chairman, Mr. Javad Zarif, Deputy

Foreign Minister of Iran. It was a pleasure and an enriching experience to participate in the work of the Bureau together with the Vice-Chairmen and the two Chairmen of the Working Groups, who provided effective and expert guidance to the deliberations of the subsidiary bodies.

Finally, allow me to extend my gratitude to Mr. Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for the counsel and support that he provided to the Bureau and to Member States. Let me also express my sincere appreciation to the members of the Secretariat for their tireless efforts and kind assistance, especially to Mr. Timur Alasaniya, Secretary of the Commission, the secretaries of the Working Groups, and to the members of the Disarmament Commission staff assisting the deliberations.

With these brief remarks, I recommend that the Commission adopt the draft report as contained in document A/CN.10/2000/CRP.2.

The Chairman: May I now draw the attention of representatives to the draft report of the Commission, contained in document A/CN.10/2000/CRP.2. I invite delegations to consider the draft report chapter by chapter.

Since there are no comments on chapter I, "Introduction", paragraphs 1 and 2, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt those paragraphs.

Paragraphs 1 and 2 were adopted.

The Chairman: Since there are no comments on chapter II, "Organization and work of the 2000 substantive session", paragraphs 3 to 12, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt those paragraphs.

Paragraphs 3 to 12, as orally amended, were adopted.

The Chairman: In chapter III, "Documentation", paragraphs 17 and 24 have been orally amended in the English text and 16 and 20 in the Spanish text.

I give the floor to the Secretary of the Commission.

Mr. Alasaniya (Secretary of the Commission): I would like to ask delegations to take note of the following announcement. The paper submitted by the delegation of India, which is contained in document A/CN.10/2000/WG.I/CRP.3, was not meant for publication and should not have been circulated. Obviously, it was an oversight on the part of the Secretariat, for which we apologize.

I wish also to make sure that for practical purposes, as a result of this mistake, this paper does not exist.

My second announcement is that yesterday the delegation of France, on behalf of the European Union, requested that certain documents which appeared previously under the CRP symbol be reissued as working papers. I wish to inform delegations that those documents are available. There are three documents, each a corrigendum on a CRP document, stating that the CRP documents issued on 5 July 2000 should bear the symbol of working paper — WP — and be numbered 5, 6 and 7 accordingly.

Because of this change, these working papers will appear later in all languages. I believe they will be available by the end of next week. Delegations that wish to obtain them can contact the Secretariat, and I will be happy to provide them with copies.

The Chairman: Since there are no comments on chapter III, "Documentation", paragraphs 13 to 25, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt those paragraphs.

Paragraphs 13 to 25, as orally amended, were adopted.

The Chairman: Since there are no comments on chapter IV, "Conclusions and recommendations", paragraphs 26 and 27, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt those paragraphs.

Paragraphs 26 and 27, as orally amended, were adopted.

The Chairman: Having adopted all paragraphs of the report, the Commission will now take up the draft report as a whole. May I take it that the Disarmament Commission wishes to adopt the draft report of the Disarmament Commission as a whole, as orally amended?

The draft report, as orally amended, was adopted.

Concluding statements

Mr. Osei (Ghana): Mr. Chairman, I wish to thank you for allowing me to take the floor once again. I am doing so because I feel the need to put on record, and I believe I speak also for my colleague Gabriela

Martinic, the deep sense of appreciation for the assistance given to us by members of the Secretariat in our work as Chairpersons.

I give these thanks not only collectively but also individually. I extend this sense of appreciation to Timur Alasaniya, Tatyana Shestakova, Mika Murakami, Lidija Komatina, Saijin Zhang, Sergei Cherniavsky, Nazir Kamal and Cheryl Stoute. If I have omitted any names, it is entirely my fault and not out of a lack of recognition for the work that they have done. I thank them very much on my own behalf and on behalf of my fellow Chairperson.

I also want to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your very wise guidance. It is not by accident that as a young man you are greying so rapidly. But this is a reflection of wisdom, as we read in the book of Proverbs.

Mr. Méndez (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the countries of the Latin American and the Caribbean, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, at the conclusion of the 2000 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. We also would like to thank the Chairpersons of the two Working Groups, Mr. Yaw Odei Osei of Ghana, and Mrs. Gabriela Martinic of Argentina, for the determination and dedication they have shown in conducting the important and complex tasks that were assigned to those groups.

We hope that the work done in Working Groups I and II will allow the Commission's discussions to move forward on the two substantive items on our agenda — that is, ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament and practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms.

Finally, we thank the Secretariat staff for their cooperation and assistance, and we thank the interpreters, the translators, and the conference officers.

Mr. Mesdoua (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Allow me on behalf of my delegation to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the competence with which you have guided the substantive session of the Disarmament Commission.

I also would like to thank and congratulate the Chairpersons of the two Working Groups. I thank the representative of Ghana for the manner and brio with which he guided the work of Working Group I. The results he achieved are significant and make us optimistic for the future of our work.

As regards Working Group II, allow me to pay tribute to Mrs. Gabriela Martinic of Argentina for her efforts, and for her perseverance, tenacity and integrity. We never doubted her integrity. She is an expert in the field of disarmament with whom we have worked extensively. We greatly appreciated her talents, and we greatly appreciated the competence with which she guided the work of the Group. The intensive consultations we conducted for many hours yesterday are a clear indication of the interest of all delegations in this issue. They also indicated — and all of us here should say something about this — that this is an item that covers issues that are very hard to define. Perhaps we have not been able to reach an understanding on a final document, but this is an evolving and very painstaking process. The at times animated discussion allowed us to pinpoint areas in which further efforts will be required to bring views closer together. But all delegations showed good will to bring together their views — which, in our opinion, are not really as far apart as they seem. The work has begun; the process of reflection is under way. Let us all work as partners in identifying what is indeed relevant to the topic. Let us avoid what may divide us.

The time factor has not always been our ally during this session. It seems that we will have to return to the previous timetable of three weeks and a day. We are all in the same global swimming pool, as Gabriela Martinic was saying. The water is cold, but we are all engaged in a competition, and not just taking a pleasurable dip. We are dealing with important issues, issues that involve national defence. These are questions that have to be very precisely defined, questions on which we will have to all work together as partners, following the principles and rules that guide us here in the United Nations.

Once again, Sir, I thank you and the Chairpersons of the two Working Groups for your patience throughout the long days of our working sessions. I also thank all those who worked behind the scenes, especially your assistant, Hamid Baeidi Nejad, who was always present, who always tried to build bridges among groups and to reach satisfactory results.

Mr. Al-Hariri (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank you, Sir, for having so brilliantly chaired the 2000 session, and for your

efforts with respect to the two Working Groups. Certainly your presence has given a special cast to the work of the Disarmament Commission, which was furthered by your competence and experience. We hope your presence will be felt again in forthcoming sessions of the Commission.

Allow me also to thank the Chairpersons of the two Working Groups Mr. Yaw Odei Osei and Mrs. Gabriela Martinic, for their efforts in guiding the work of the groups. Those efforts make us feel confident and optimistic about the future of the Commission's work. We also would like to thank all those in the Secretariat who worked to promote the success of the Commission's work at this session.

Mr. Brunet (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to join previous speakers in congratulating you, Mr. Chairman, and warmly thanking you for the determination, the patience and even the serenity, with which you have conducted the debate. Here I am thinking in particular of the difficult preliminary negotiations that we had on the agenda. Our New York colleagues in particular know what I am talking about, but you too have felt — in the struggles of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons — how difficult the situation was. At the time many thought the situation really did not augur well for the Disarmament Commission and that there was little to look forward to.

Yet, thanks to your patience and determination, Sir, we have been able to make progress in our work on our agenda. For the work we have accomplished in the last two weeks, I also wish to thank the Chairpersons of the two Working Groups, Mrs. Gabriela Martinic and Mr. Yaw Odei Osei, who have done impressive work. As other speakers have noted, the positions of delegations were frequently very far apart on sensitive issues. Nonetheless, they both succeeded in guiding the debate. We know how difficult it is to debate subjects that have already been deliberated at length in other forums and which are very important and sensitive for many delegations. The role of the chairpersons of the Commission and of its Working Groups is very important in this respect, and enables the debate to move ahead. And a debate did indeed take place. As noted, this is an evolutionary process, and we have two years ahead of us. But we are certain that on this good basis we will be able to move ahead.

I would like to thank the Secretariat and all others who contributed: all those who work behind the scenes supporting the Chairman, the Chairpersons of the Working Groups, and the Secretariat — the translators, interpreters, and all the staff members who contributed to the success of the session.

I wish to add, on behalf of the European Union, that some have said we did not have a debate solely on the agenda items, but also on the length and exact date of our session. Some thought that the European Union had balked at postponing the session to July, because July is the time to think about vacations. But clearly, the European Union was here, and was very active. So a July session posed no problems for us. We will also be here next year.

Mr. Du Preez (South Africa): On behalf of the States of the Non-Aligned Movement, including those which have already thanked you, Mr. Chairman, it is my pleasure to thank you and the rest of the Iranian delegation for your leadership, both during the formal meetings of the Commission and during the informal consultations prior to the start of the Commission's work. It is a particular pleasure for us to see a member of the Non-Aligned Movement chair our work.

Allow me also to thank the Chairpersons of the two Working Groups for their diligent efforts to guide our deliberations on the two substantive agenda items under consideration. Their determination and enthusiasm in guiding our work in the Working Groups were commendable, especially given the limited time we gave them to prepare for the session. Our appreciation also extends to the Rapporteur and to the other members of the Bureau.

I would also like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Dhanapala, and the staff of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, and the Conference Services staff. I would particularly like to thank the Secretary of the Commission, and the secretaries and the Working Groups and their staffs for their reliable advice and assistance during our work. Finally, we wish to extend our heartfelt thanks to the translators and interpreters, without whom we would not have been able to conduct our work.

Mr. Khairat (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): We are approaching the end of this session of the Disarmament Commission. My delegation wishes to sincerely thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the brilliant way in which you have guided the work of the Commission. We would

also like to thank all the members of the Secretariat staff for their efforts and their support for our work.

We also wish to thank the Chairpersons of the two Working Groups, our colleagues from Ghana and Argentina, for their efforts, their active work and their successful conduct of the work of the Working Groups.

This session of the Commission has put us on the road which we will travel over the next two years. I am referring to the ideas expressed on the two substantive items under consideration. This session has given rise to considerable optimism about the possibility of converging viewpoints and making progress in our work.

Mr. Khan (Pakistan): For the sake of brevity, I would like to associate my delegation completely with the views expressed by the representative of Algeria. However, at the same time, I cannot surrender entirely to Algeria the opportunity to thank you personally, Mr. Chairman, for the excellent manner in which you have steered the work of the Disarmament Commission. The fact that you decided to chair the Disarmament Commission at a time when the prospects for an agreement on its agenda look bleak is reflective of your country's and your own commitment to disarmament.

At a personal level, having met you in Islamabad and having seen you work and perform in the various meetings of the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, it is indeed an honour for me to have been able to work under you. I thank you, for all your good work. Through you, I would also like to extend my delegation's thanks to the Chairpersons of the two Working Groups, the members of the Bureau, the Rapporteur and the members of the Secretariat staff for all the excellent work they have done.

The Chairman: We have come to the end of our work. I will spare members a statement, but let me thank them very much for the spirit of cooperation and flexibility with which they have participated in the work of the Commission throughout our informal consultations, as well as in the course of the last two weeks. I want to thank members for their cooperation with the Chairpersons of the two Working Groups, and I want to thank the Chairpersons themselves again for their very good work in leading the discussions on difficult items in the two Working Groups.

I particularly want to express my appreciation to the members of the Bureau, the Vice-Chairpersons of the Commission, for their cooperation and assistance, particularly during the time of my absence, in allowing the Commission to work smoothly. I am grateful to them and to all members.

Let me also join other speakers in expressing on behalf of the Commission and on my own account our appreciation to Mr. Dhanapala, the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, and to his colleagues and assistants, who have participated with interest in the work of our Commission and have provided us with counsel and good work.

Let me also express my appreciation to the Secretary of the Commission, to his assistants, to the secretaries of the two Working Groups, as well as to the staff members of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, the staff of the Department of Disarmament Affairs and other members of the Secretariat who have assisted us in conducting our affairs.

Let me pay a special tribute and offer thanks to our interpreters, who have stayed with us during our long and arduous work, particularly last night, when they stayed with us until late, and to our friends the conference officers and documents officers. I am grateful to them all.

Closure of the session

The Chairman: I declare closed the 2000 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.